

# INTERIM

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## Editor's Note

It is 1984, and we sit here in the Pacific Northwest with our books, our little magazine and our renaissance. We predicted our renaissance in 1944, and it was a wee bit late in coming, but as a young colleague of ours put it (in his usual succinct manner) in the *Sewanee Review* (Autumn, 1959) "it finally got here."

In 1944 when *Interim* first was launched, conscientious objectors printed little magazines out of birchbark on the Pacific Coast. Little magazine poets valiantly volunteered for the chorus of "Oklahoma" throughout World War II. Everybody was discovering Self. The Gotham Bookmart increased its number of teas to two a month. When the war came to a close, veterans went in for "little mags"—known to traveling publishers' representatives (\$2.50 lunches notwithstanding) as "little maggots." Throughout the land these periodicals sprang up—in such profusion that a man in North Hollywood had to catalogue them, so they could tell each other apart. *Time* magazine editors read them. Henry Miller read them. English department chairmen read them. Soon little magazine editors were speaking at summer writers' conferences. Little magazine editors were swarming the creative writing departments of respectable universities, searching for the truth in their own ways. After a while (and it should be remembered that by this time the little maggots had delayed the BOMB) there were LITTLE AMERICAN SCHOLARS, LITTLE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICS, LITTLE PMLA'S and LITTLE LOOK'S. Henry Siedel Canby had to buttonhole Irwin Edman as he was coming out of NBC (following his program, "The Understanding of Understanding") to procure his signature for a "Little Magazine of the Month Club."

By 1979 the little magazine movement had become insurmountable. Congressmen, rather than attending sessions, spent their time at mimeograph machines in the Mayflower Hotel printing poems by their constituents. The man in Hollywood who had catalogued the little mags was now president of the United States. Your editor himself was in the cabinet.

It should be noted as most important that Russia, through spies at Sears Roebuck in Chicago and through the staff of Fulton Lewis, Jr. in Washington had heard of the goings-on of little mags. Slowly and clandestinely they had started in the Soviet Union. A woman in bifocal warfare in Minsk, who slept with a census taker from Kiev, passed the news on to her paramour. In no time at all, quiet quarterlies had arisen as if from nowhere. Volcanic contributions to SHREDS, MOUNTAIN MULE, AS IF, and other organs of expression for the young writer came forth. The Politburo was incensed, but their fury was too much. OGPU itself sooner or later came through with a magazine called OH I DON'T KNOW—MAYBE.

Literary activity quieted down a bit after that. Penitent radicals returned to their jobs teaching Sanscrit, Old English, The Minor Welsh Lyric, and Early Ronald Firbank. *Time* magazine took back many of its old staff still living. A promoter in Wenatchee sent 2,000 crates of apples to Moscow. The sun came over the long dead *Horizon*. Bob Hillyer's heir decided that things at Kenyon College would be too tough even for him, and the donors of the New Critics monument at Tension Grimace, South Carolina, contributed \$35.00 to the Red Cross. James Laughlin Jr. continued to re-issue Henry Miller.

Here at *Interim* we have our renaissance now. All vital materials have been used up in the little magazine industry. And the funny thing is, we just sit here with the same old values, the same old debts, the same old questions.

A. WILBER STEVENS.

## The Foreigners

The two newcomers who were to take up life in the Hesselbaugh household had arrived only two days apart. The cat, the first comer, had been brought out from Middletown as a favor to Alma Hesselbaugh's distracted friends, the Cavanaughs. The second comer, Millie, two days later was fetched home by Mr. Hesselbaugh in the afternoon immediately following the funeral of his Aunt Livy Lichtfuss in Greencastle.

So far the newcomers had not met, and the earlier of the two had, in fact, been quite forgotten by the Hesselbaughs in the flurry of introducing Millie into the third home of her still unfledged life.

"Well, here we are, here's the little old woman," Mr. Hesselbaugh had playfully introduced the new lodger as he entered the kitchen door, pushing her before him with the palms of large, rugged hands. And Millie had moved just so far and no farther than the spot to which the indulgent thrust had fetched her, while all three Hesselbaughs paid her, as she faced them immobilized on her spot, their most expectant attention. She had stood there in the warm kitchen, blinking at the white ruffled curtains which dazzled and danced in the light of a rare strong December sun. She had stood there precariously on two very small, very thin stalks, mottled from knee to ankle with cold. She had made no motion to take off her unaccountable traveling hat, the bowler crown of which rose round and high on her head, like a neat overturned kettle, and which maintained the position of the whole by supporting its narrow brim on the frail joists provided by the tips of her ears. From the nostrils of her raw red minikin-nose drearily slipped an unmolested viscid stream.

"Dear me Redeemer," Mrs. Hesselbaugh had been led to remark, after a startled and silent moment of examination, "what a cold the poor soul's taken. Where's your handkerchief, Millie?"

"It was in my pocket, but now I find it isn't," Millie had answered.

The three Hesselbaughs had waited briefly and responsively for some friendly garnish of details concerning the disappearance of a belonging so vital under such taxing circumstances. Then, as it became clear that Millie had turned the subject to that precise degree of roundness which was natural to her particular style, Mr. Hesselbaugh had gone off to the barn with a loud injunction that she was to make herself at home, and Mrs. Hesselbaugh and Alma had taken Millie upstairs to initiate her into the comforts of her new quarters and into their cordial acquaintance with the obligations of wholesome hospitality. They had plied her with an abundance of normal questions about her life with poor Aunt Livy—about when the crucial period of Aunt Livy's sickness had set in, what her chores at Aunt Livy's inconvenient old house had been, what Aunt Livy had put in the school lunch-box, how she had "taken" to her first half year of school in Greencastle, whether she could remember when her mother, Aunt Livy's niece, had died. They had asked all these, and had only omitted,

with mature tact, to ask what was to them the most absorbing question of all: what Aunt Livy had told Millie about her "scampish" paternity. Millie had fulfilled her end of the bargain in respect to all this tremendous cordiality with docility, gravity, and the utterest, nakedest minimum of sparkling personal detail. Her answers, in fine, were pared so to a hairsbreadth that the lavish Husselbaughs, inexhaustible as they felt their resources for "drawing out" to be, began to suffer the uneasy sense that the cupboard holding their supplies was being emptied with dangerous improvidence, without forethought either for future needs or for means of replenishment. After two hours when Millie's appetite for putting away every new subject in one bite seemed as competent as ever, they felt constrained to use a prudence they did not ordinarily feel about taking out new subjects, and thus the pauses between the sessions of questions and answers began to show a cautious lengthening. Altogether, when the hour for preparing dinner drew on, the Husselbaughs had recognized in themselves something very like a gasp of relief for the reprieve it would offer from the hard spiritual task of putting Millie at her ease.

Mrs. Husselbaugh's spirit, however, had quickly sprung back after they had all three returned to the safe firm ground of the kitchen, where talk "came natural" in terms of whether mustard pickles or watermelon pickles or both were to be brought up from the cellar, of whether a chicken pie, made up of the left-over bird, or neps and spareribs from the fresh supply of last week's butchering should be served up for supper.

Now, as she turned from a calculative, constructive look into the refrigerator, tying on her apron as she turned, she became apologetically reaware of the person of Millie, whom she had been not unwilling for the moment to forget. Millie was planted, in an insubstantial and silent way, beside the door opening on the porch, on her two splinter-like legs. Her rheumy eyes were as silent and unlocalized in effect as her posture, and the same dreary stream was oozing, sluggishly but inexorably, from her nostrils down over her upper lip. Mrs. Husselbaugh stopped short with an unaccustomed sense of harassed insufficiency and inefficiency, and she passed to her daughter a look—and was rewarded with a quick and sympathetic return of the look—which plainly remarked that one might with good reason feel at one's wits end to know what was to be done about such an outlandish bit of Nature as dangled there in a comfortable kitchen. Millie returned the Husselbaugh regard without comment, merely drawing in a deep snuffling draught of breath which although it effected an instant's counter ebb of the ineluctable rheum, also caused a spasm of helpless, sludgy choking.

"Try the Kleenex I put in your pocket," said Alma with resolute composure.

Millie's damp-looking claw-thin fingers reached obediently into the pocket of her dress, pressed the tissue hard against her nostrils and rubbed, rough-shod with it, down the chafed ridge between nose and upper lip.

"Now what might you like to do?" Mrs. Husselbaugh's voice held a shadow of dubiety in its heartiness.

Millie's eyes paused upon Mrs. Husselbaugh with a round and inexpressive gaze. "I don't guess I hardly know," she said.

"Well, I'll tell you what you could do for *me*," said Mrs. Husselbaugh, feeling for no plausible reason a new access of optimism. "You could go right up-

stairs and bring me down my old black notebook of cooking recipes, being your legs are younger than mine."

Millie observed economically that it would be all right, and after listening to a number of circuitous directions about the whereabouts of the recipe notebook, she carefully placed her hands in her pockets and set off on her youthful legs with an aged gait to begin her career of transplantation to the chores and traditions of a new household.

The crack in the barely open door at the end of the upstairs hall cast across the threshold a borderland of stored-up cold from the unheated room beyond. Millie stepped in, and wheeled slowly around the room, hunting with glassy, water-dimmed eyes, the black notebook. At one side of the fireplace rose tiers of deep wide open shelves, and there upon the third shelf, next to a neat pile of magazines—the year's accumulation from Alma Husselbaugh's subscription to the *American Home*—lay the black notebook. Her expression unchanged by discovery, Millie approached, shivering in the stored-up cold, and finding the third shelf too high for a safe grasp of the notebook, she insinuated a thin shoe between two of the books in the row of Alma Husselbaugh's collection from her subscription to the *Book of the Month Club*. As she pulled herself up, the two disturbed books fell oppositely sidewise and each bore down, in a fan-shaped collapse, the loosely ranged volumes on either side. Millie pulled out the black notebook, and withdrawing her foot from the second shelf, stepped back down. And it was then that she saw the cat, exposed by the collapse of the books, huddled at the back of the wide shelf.

Not a hair of the cat moved. It merely directed upon Millie an unimaginable look from the starkly fixed large circles of its eyes. Millie, as motionless, returned the look cloudily but unblinkingly. The moments ticked on in the cold room, while the two pairs of eyes stared, locked together as if by some mysterious traction of their focus. Then Millie replaced the fallen books, one by one, and without other communication than a deeply drawn snuffle, and clasping the notebook, took her stoopshouldered way downstairs.

"There's someone up there," she remarked at once.

The Husselbaughs, in perplexity, halted their paring of the apples for the Brown Betty.

"Behind the books," Millie sparingly filled out.

"Oh my souls," exclaimed Mrs. Husselbaugh with a shock of realization. "It's that cat, Alma. I'd forgotten all about her for hours, the poor aggravating thing."

"Why does she sit behind books?" asked Millie dispassionately.

The Husselbaughs looked at each other, compressed their lips, and shook their heads wearily to signify that there was a history of helplessness behind that story.

"Well," began Alma, thinking it out for Millie in what she hoped would be Millie's terms, "she's a cat from Porto Rico and that's a country that's a long way off—"

"Why did she come?" interposed Millie's phlegm-choked voice.

"Well," said Alma, conscious of a certain lack of deferential sensibility in an interruption which hurried her so summarily into the saliences of the matter, "she was brought by the people that owned her down there." She went on, bringing to bear a florid and dramatic host of detail, to describe for the child-

mind the vicissitudes of the cat's life since it had left its rightful home in Porto Rico—how it had screamed for a week of days in the Baltimore apartment, how its ejection had been demanded by the heartless landlord, how the Cavanaughhs had consented to reorient it in the ampler surroundings of the house in Middletown, how the Cavanaughhs had finally succumbed to desperation because the cat, although it had given up rending their ears with screams, had also given up eating, and finally how the Cavanaughhs had so tugged at the Hesselbaugh heartstrings with their dilemma that they, the Hesselbaughs, had brought the cat home, hoping that the good wholesome rural surroundings of their place just outside of town—being complete with barn, hay, mice and rats, and all—would revive the cat's morale, and readjust it, so to speak, to a healthy social-minded life.

"But up to now," complained Alma, remembering suddenly the poverty of rewards they had known from their enterprise, "we haven't been able to do a thing with her. Let alone her being such a creepy, unattractive beast—"

"And she hasn't taken a bite of food for Heaven knows how long," added Mrs. Hesselbaugh.

"And she's always hiding herself off somewhere, like behind the books, so we don't half know where she's moping half the time."

During the duet, with its plaintive theme of baffled philanthropy, Millie had preserved an unrevelatory silence, her one detectable response consisting of a foot-maneuver—that of bending her sticks at the ankles in such a way that she stood on the rims of the soles of her crossed shoes.

At last an acknowledgment was conferred. "I see," she said.

The observation was not perhaps more than could be called a straw, but it was enough to provide the Hesselbaughs with the notion of committing the task of the cat's rehabilitation to Millie's vision. Perhaps it was Millie who would be just the one to coax the cat back to normal life, suggested Mrs. Hesselbaugh in one more manifestation of her never long-suppressible fits of optimism. She turned cajolingly to Millie and, meeting again that round-eyed impassiveness, she added a little uncertainly, "Maybe you'd like to try once—"

"I'll see," was Millie's ambiguous encouragement.

She turned and deliberately mounted the stairs. When she had closed the door of the cold room behind her, she moved to the wall of books on the second shelf and kneeling down carefully removed three books, one at a time. By way of the new doorway, she and the cat were face to face, their two heads, their four eyes, as close together as the leaves on a tree. Millie put out a cold hand and laid it lightly on the gaunt gray haunch of the cat. The haunch quivered slightly.

"You are from Porto Rico," remarked Millie. She moved her hand tentatively from the haunch to the top of the head.

"You are a Porto Rico cat, and you have just come." She offered the further information in a calmly knowing way. The four round eyes interlocked.

"I'm new here too. I'm from Greencastle and you are from Porto Rico which is a farther ways away."

There was no response from the cat and no change in its cramped position, but when Millie shifted her moist hand from the cold fur of the head to the hollow under the chin, another uneasy vibration passed through the cat's diaphragm.

"You don't have to leave here," said Millie suddenly, "if you don't prefer. If you want your house here, you have it here." Her words carried the solid assurance of a decision officially delivered. Then with the same air of authority, she walled up the doorway, and left the exiled Porto Rican to the security of its cold castle.

From the moment the routines of Millie's sole mission in the Hesselbaugh world were defined. In the following few days, her flimsy straight legs mounted the stairs to the room on trips which ran into the count of scores each day, and she bore with her on every trip a token of service—a dish of milk, a bite of meat, a raw egg, a scrap of quilt, or cast-off cushion. Thus it was much to the puzzled surprise of the Hesselbaughs that material signals of the cat's surrender to such seducements failed to appear—just as utterly as did the dishes which mounted the stairs fail utterly to reappear in the kitchen. But whenever they went so far as to express either solicitude or inquisitiveness about her progress with the cat's state of mind—or about that more significant relevance, the cat's "bodily" state, Millie's answers were all of the same unsatisfying close mouthed diagnostic character. "She isn't ready," she would tell them. And she tacitly discouraged any willingness on their part to look in on the ministrations upstairs, quite as much as she resisted all their attempts to settle her becomingly and winsomely into the atmosphere of a house brimming with the genialities of passing neighbors and friends.

"She's such a peaked, old-fashioned little article," Mrs. Hesselbaugh confided apologetically to the visiting Julia Cavanaugh who had come on this Wednesday afternoon to inquire after the Cantwell's cat. "I don't mind saying that it's hard to know how to take her."

Alma's nod confirmed her mother's sense of the mystification of their new relative. "She's so *queer*. Like an old old owl. She's not our folks, if you know what I mean, any more than the Cantwell cat."

"It was living with Aunt Livy, I imagine, makes her like that," meditated Mrs. Hesselbaugh. "She lived what you might say in the past. And then Millie's mother getting into trouble like she did—and it always takes more than one to do *that*—and then passing away so young like she did. Aunt Livy, to my recollection, commenced right then to get funny, like. Now *you* know that wouldn't have been a good life for a child even if Aunt Livy hadn't been ashamed how Millie came into the world. It wouldn't surprise me if the poor old soul didn't feel *glad* to pass from this world, that's my honest opinion." She paused, considering the impressive radical character of the honest opinion before she went on . . . "And now with such an ugly cough as the child's got, never in the Kingdom would we think of putting her to a new school—not till past Christmas anyhow."

On the other side of the door between the kitchen and the dining room, Millie was listening. She was established there merely because, when the visitor-talk had begun, she had been peering through the bellying glass doors of the china closet at a miniature china basket which looked to be a likely vessel for the bite of left-over sausage in her pocket. Noiselessly, she went away without the basket, and up the stairs to the cold room.

Inside, she took a straight way, veteran in its deftness, down a narrow aisle, formed by two parallel ranks of dishes, cups, and saucers, each scantily victualled with the fragments of Millie's daily garnerings. The hedge of dishes led

directly to an inconsiderable red curtain, which she had contrived as a covering for the doorway to the second shelf, by tucking the sleeves of her sweater between chinks in the book-wall, and dropping the body of it over the aperture once filled by books. She passed through the rank of vessels—their temptations all untasted, all staling, even to the latest contribution which rested, like a sacramental offering, at the threshold of the door—and, lifting the red curtain she carefully inserted her head and her meager shoulders so that they were intimately ensconced in the dusky, icy recess close to the huddle of gray fur. The cat now lay in a sleepless crouch among wrinkled layers of oddments—stray woolen socks, the single trouser of an old pajama suit of Mr. Hesselbaugh's, a musty muffler. Millie's hand cupped the cat's unresisting chin. The weakened head rocked slightly upon her supporting hand. And suddenly, as her eyes explored the alien eyes—eyes filmed from the exhaustion of indomitable fasting and fixity—her lips pressed grimly together, her chin turned a mottled waxen white from the harsh puckering of the skin, and for a little while the slow, hot tears began to drop on the unkempt, coarsening fur of the cat's head.

"You are a foreigner," said Millie.

She slowly withdrew her head, and replaced the red curtain. Then kneeling beside the first shelf, with equal deliberation, she removed the row of books there, slid her body in sideways upon the cleared surface, her cheek flat against the cold wood, her knees drawn up, and with one straining freed hand, laboriously pulled back the row of books, volume by volume. When the voluntary imprisonment was finished, she stretched out in careful rigidity on her back, constricting her body against the efforts of a fit of thick and viscous coughing to threaten the fragility and tidiness of her household arrangements. For some time thereafter, the murmur of a desultory communing passed upward through the ceiling of her quarters to the sleepless exile above her—reports of what she had heard downstairs, accountings of life with Aunt Livy, who had knitted her a little muff once . . . who had never been cross whenever she secretly brushed her forefinger across the buttermold and licked the mouthful, who had only said for reproof, "Whose little finger maybe might've done that?" . . . who had had to die, so Aunt Livy herself had told her, because it was time and Providence wanted it that way, and not at all as *they* had said, because she wanted to go away from Millie . . .

"You can have Aunt Livy for your name, if you prefer," remarked Millie's hoarse voice through the ceiling to the Porto Rican. "I'm glad for you to have it."

Then she brought out suddenly, "Me and you are both foreigners. But it will be better when you have Aunt Livy for your name."

The monologue was over. One book from the wall toppled and then another, and Millie finally emerged with red eyes. As the last book was replaced, the voice of Alma Hesselbaugh called from the end of the upstairs hall.

"Millie, Millie." Alma, whose curiosity, now that it had occurred to her that she was so close upon the region of the private and undisclosed ministrations, with the minister herself on the scene, was for the moment willing to defy Millie's unwritten prohibition. She flung open the door.

"My Land," she exclaimed shuddering under the impact of the stored-up cold, "I'd forgotten we'd turned off the heat here. It's no place for you to be standing around in."

Then her astonished eyes took in the row of vessels on the floor, the red curtain, and the transfixed and peaked person of Millie beside the curtain.

"Why dear Lord," she went on in a tone of half-hilarious, half-frightened expostulation as she cast a series of quickly discerning glances into the sandbox, into one dish after another. "Why, that poor cat must be dead starved. Where is she, Millie?"

Millie's hands clenched a piece of red curtain. Then she slowly drew it back. And Alma, serious with misgiving, knelt by the shelf and stared in. For a moment, no words offered themselves for dealing with the case in the Hesselbaugh way.

"Well," said Alma finally, "that poor cat's so weak she can't even move. Maybe if we take her to the barn—"

"No," said Millie. "No."

"When Daddy comes in," Alma went on firmly, "we'll let him carry her down though I doubt she couldn't hardly even scratch anybody in her condition."

"No," repeated Millie. "She doesn't know about barns. She's from Porto Rico. Beside, she'll be too cold."

"It's the only thing, Millie." With that, Alma grasped Millie's cold trembling hand in a warm solid one, and pulled her from the room and down the stairs, uttering redoubtable warnings about pneumonia and consumption at every step of a journey retarded at every step to Millie's tendency to silent crab-like regression.

In the general family consultation which followed, the three Hesselbaughs were at one on the policy of the final resort, and, reading into the unabated strain of Millie's face a kind of special will to be broken, a zealotry to be persuaded, a pessimism to be reassured, they all gave their fullest ingenuity to elaborating on the miraculous properties of the barn and of the noises and smells of Nature for the restoration of the Porto Rican and any other mentionable kindred case.

"You'll see, little only woman," said Mr. Hesselbaugh with a retired farmer's confident reckoning of the ways of dumb animals. "Once she gets the smell of the place, you'll see her getting roses in her cheeks again."

He trod heavily up the stairs, Millie running mutely remonstrative at his side. And without any ostensible breach of the peace, without struggle or altercation, the cat was brought downstairs in Mr. Hesselbaugh's arms and deported, once more deported, to the new foreign wilderness of the barn. Millie, her breathing heavy and uneven, maintained a dogged, short-gaited gallop just a little ahead of Mr. Hesselbaugh, constantly turning sideways and throwing her head backward almost upon her shoulder blades in order to keep a vigilant sight of the cat's eyes which stared with a sightless despair from between the lapels of Mr. Hesselbaugh's fur-lined jacket.

After they had closed the barn door behind them and stood in the chill sweet-smelling air, Millie's owl-eyes slowly circled the infinite spaces—the numberless dusky offings above her in the loft and around her in the stalls, the cold honeycomb of hiding places in the hay, the piles of lumber, the machinery. She closed her eyes for a moment and shook her head tremulously.

"Well, I'll tell you," offered Mr. Hesselbaugh, intending some show of inventiveness in his approach to the paralyzed look. "We'll fix her up in this

here bushel basket before you can say Jack Robinson. And then *you* can tell her what it's all about from now on."

The cat made one feebly desperate effort to resist the descent, and then, dragging herself to the far edge of the basket away from the hands which had forced her down, she sank into a new inertness.

For the remainder of the waning afternoon, Millie did not emerge from the wilderness of the barn, where the vast expanses of cold unstirred air shimmered with slow-floating motes and particles, where the silence simmered with unfamiliar noises: the rustle in the loft of some small avalanche of alfalfa which would cease moving as mysteriously as it had been launched, the rasp of Blossom's tongue as it licked up the chop in her trough, the occasional switch of her tail against the stall, the random ghostly whispers of the infinite unseen inanimate worlds. But, although she did not stir from those regions, she was feverishly busy within, discharging before nightfall a transplanted set of ministrations. Painstakingly, she edged the basket with its silent weight into the dim corner of an unused stall. With an almost infinitesimal gradualness—so that the cat should scarcely feel the motion of the change—she lifted the basket on its side, and clothed the nakedness of the circular door with a gunny sack. Then, gliding touch by gliding touch, she patiently ingrafted the interior with clumsy comforts, winnowing a pad under the wasted shanks, pillowng the curiously tufted, wild-looking paws, now so flaccid and nerveless, on packets of alfalfa. The filtered daylight in the barn began to dissolve into winter twilight, but the ant-like search for niceties and the work of domestic repatriation went on, until the whole dwelling was almost a shadow, its outlines blurred within a thin cloud of alfalfa hay. When the moment for final appraisal arrived, she sank on her knees, brushed through the cloud of alfalfa, and once more re-opened the often disturbed flap.

In the wavering vaporous light, the cat's eyes, morbidly enlarged and vacantly luminous, were fixed in the circle of the cold interior darkness framed by the basket. But no single trace of fear now remained to haunt the pupils of the glazed eyes—or to alloy a look purified almost to unearthliness by a final submission to hopelessness. A sickly foam seeped out at the edge of her mouth, and Millie wiped it away.

"I couldn't help it," quavered her husky voice through the obscurity. "They took it out of my hands already." She laid her head against the feebly throbbing, sunken sides.

When the real darkness came on, when Mr. Husselbaugh had long since milked Blossom, and a dish of the frothy warm milk had been set before the fasting one, and the virulent cawings of a tribe of crows in the nearby pair of sycamores had long since flagged into silence, Millie still crouched near a cat totally inured to hazards and hunger and sleeplessness. And it was only by dint of a concert of wheedling remonstrations that the Husselbaughs were able to wrest her out and away from under what, so it struck them uncomfortably, seemed to be a sorcery cast by an unknown suffering, the sorcery, in a sense, of suffering itself; only then that they were able to wrest her away to what they felt should be regarded as the best of the irresistibly consoling things of life—the supper table.

Early the next morning, she was already dressed and downstairs. From the hall-rack, she took her bowler hat and placed it over her head, over the two

pinched braids which strained the hair away from her thin-skinned temples and travelled obliquely down to the back, like two tributary streams, to be absorbed in a central parent braid whose own course suddenly and surprisingly ended in a wizened wisp choked by a fragment of ribbon. She sought out Mr. Husselbaugh's old jacket from the back porch, carefully turning back the cuffs into six bulky rolls.

Mrs. Husselbaugh, stirring up the wheat-cake batter, paused to regard the phenomenon of this well-girded but still rheumy apparition. It was her opinion that this was no time for anyone to be going anywhere without first having breakfast.

"I have to go and see Aunt Livy," said Millie.

Mrs. Husselbaugh's mixing spoon dropped and, unheeded, buried itself slowly in the cake batter. Alma Husselbaugh arrested the motion of a coffee cup just settling in its saucer, and Mr. Husselbaugh lost his column and line in his farm journal.

"But Millie—" protested Alma, "your Aunt Livy's dead. You know that."

The Husselbaugh's attention to Millie was now an undivided but guarded force. "You *know* that, Millie."

"No," said Millie, "she isn't. But she's sick, she's terrible sick. I have to go out, being I can't leave anything happen—"

As in a troubled dream of daft disorders, the Husselbaughs watched her fill a dish with milk, followed with apprehensive eyes her preparations for departure to the barn.

When there were still no signs of a return after the lapse of half an hour, Mr. Husselbaugh, frowningly chewing his toothpick, set out after her.

Millie stood, with an air of terrible transfixedness, in the center of the barn floor. And Mr. Husselbaugh was far from reassured by the look of such a stability.

"She's gone," came the two words, as harsh, as vehement as a crow's caw.

"Well, now, well, now," said Mr. Husselbaugh. He wouldn't, he avowed somewhat too heartily, be so sure of that himself, he would be more likely to reckon that she was just showing signs of picking up. "Maybe," he added in a transparently guilty tone of insincerity, "she's catching a rat right now."

"She isn't here. I've hunted and hunted," said Millie, ignoring all kindly readiness to offer ways out of facing the iron truth. "She couldn't *catch* a rat," she cried in a small short-lived fury of rejection which tightened and paled her peaked face. "She was too sick."

Monotonous, hoarse reiterations that she had hunted and hunted filled the barn. Mr. Husselbaugh, dazed by the relentless repulses suffered by his somewhat scanty levy of cheerful platitudes (all of them concerned with keeping up hopes and holding up chins), finally experienced an almost demoralized eagerness to admit himself beaten by a greater, more adamant fortitude than his own, merely in order that he might escape from the atmosphere of such sternly embraced calamity.

"Don't you worry," was his final limp offering, as he turned to go into the house. And then losing his head at the moment of his stealing a last timid look at the face of stone, he made the irrevocable mistake of adding, "But if she don't come back, there's always more cats to be had, old lady."

Her answer was a look so glacial, one conveying so freezing an indictment of the simplicity, the childishness of his mental compass that he closed the barn door behind him and hurried, sweating in the frosty air, to the refuge of the house.

When they fetched Millie in for her dinner, a noon day meal which Mr. Hesselbaugh had eaten early and from which he had conspicuously absented himself out of an understandable tenderness for his own discomfited heart, she was cold and snuffling, red-eyed and silent, and the Hesselbaugh women devoutly wished that they dared to burst into tears to relax a gloom which Millie herself (who, they felt, should, by that homely and orthodox means, be the one to mitigate the common tension) steadfastly refused to break. For half the long afternoon, she hovered over the register in the floor of the back hall, making no motions with her rocking chair, uttering no sounds except intermittent coughs and snuffles, while the Hesselbaugh women sewed in the dining room, remarking from time to time in subdued voices on their hopes that she was beginning to forget, beginning to be sensible about it, if she stayed inside this way. That was how, fortified by their hopes that she was forgetting, they presently forgot Millie herself, until their awareness that their needles were beginning to glimmer before their eyes in the suddenly darkening wintry light of the later afternoon, made them also aware that their ears had not for some time been fretted by unsavory snuffles. A call, and then a glance into the hallway found only the empty rocking chair over the register.

"She's gone out there again," said Mrs. Hesselbaugh dispiritedly. "And not fit to be out in such ugly weather, either."

Thereupon the actual absence of Millie was discovered. The concerted search opened in mild irritation, and continued in ascending anxiety as the outdoor light waned. Neither the barn nor the house, the toolshed nor the garage, the summer house nor the smoke house had given her up by nightfall. They pursued the search with lanterns, widening their three circuits, and carrying heavier hearts with their lanterns.

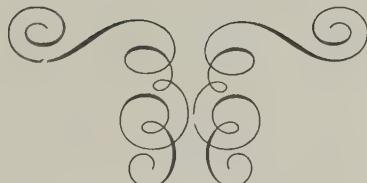
At last, on the frosted slope below the house, behind the old milkhouse, they could stop and breathe once more, and look down on what they had searched for all this while, and consider, with all the undivining wonder of homogeneous emotions, the enigma of a passion rooted with such uncanny tenacity and with such uncanny instantaneity.

Millie's Aunt Livy, stiffened by the rigors of some mazed and haggard pilgrimage which she had pursued as far as the Weeping Willow beside the milkhouse, had certainly died for the second time. Millie, lying quite as rigid—her knees drawn up close to her chest, to form a shell for the deceased, whose head was cupped by her hands—was not dead. They carried the half frozen shell of flesh, still curved around the cat, into the house. But they could not be sure that the second Aunt Livy had not contrived, in a way too strange for *their* ken, to impart to her niece before dying her own formidable will to die. They could not feel at all sure that their own common-cloth ingenuities—in the form of Dr. Burdock and his black bag, bevies of quilts and hot water bottles, and a compunctionous resolve to wheedle the obstinate exile into the circle of their most primary attention, would be proof against the strength of that other far more uncommon will and its lethal invitation.

## WILLARD N. MARSH

### Sequake

*Cradled in the harbor wind, we watched  
Dusk come with flowers: plum-heavy stars,  
Tide-shouldered blooms of kelp, and the lighthouse  
Sprouting nervous stalks of yellow.  
Suddenly the sea withdrew, pulled taut and malarial  
By lanternlight; withdrew and, gathering,  
Inclined a tower higher till it leaned sky tall  
Beneath the foam-tipped stars—at last  
Collecting, and across it lay the furled wind,  
Symmetrical with gulls:  
Then, lifting in a raveled sheet they stroked  
Beyond the flange of rocking buoys  
And there were sudden bells where birds had been.*



# CLINTON WILLIAMS

## Season Piece: 1948

*The clock says autumn and the last  
waxed fruits beneath protective glass  
gleam in the horn, bait new laid  
to drive the hungry gazer mad.*  
*The multi-figured price tags read  
a winter warning of defeat;  
dogmas tighten up their myth  
and file again their yellowed teeth.*  
*Pigeon-droppings fall upon  
the windowledge, new stain the stone.*  
*Unblinking in the fitful sun  
the people wait. The birds are gone.*  
*Still from the horn of plenty sprawls  
deceptive vision. Clock hands crawl  
toward flung rock; but shattered spells  
can hardly make such sickness well.*  
*Beyond November and lean Lent,  
beyond the grocer's plate-glass front  
the windrow eyes are prescient  
with winter's bitter discontent.*

## Toward Pluralism

Stanley Edgar Hyman's *The Armed Vision*,\* published within the past year, is subtitled "A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism." In addition to being such a general study, and a remarkably full and informative account, it is a series of essays on twelve critics who have practised notable methodologies, as Mr. Hyman regards them, during the past twenty-five years, the period to which he assigns modern criticism. The critics include: Edmund Wilson; Yvor Winters; T. S. Eliot; Van Wyck Brooks; Constance Rourke; Maude Bodkin, an English psychological critic; Christopher Caudwell, an English Marxian critic; Caroline Spurgeon; R. P. Blackmur; William Empson; I. A. Richards; and Kenneth Burke. I have listed them in order; and it may be worth observing that the order is one almost of progressive approval and admiration. There is possibly a break in the line of ascent as between Edmund Wilson and Van Wyck Brooks; though Hyman's dislike for Wilson seems more intense, his attack on Brooks seems more frequently to find an objective target. Certainly the series ends with Kenneth Burke on a peak of solitary grandeur from which new laws or new tables are expected momently to proceed.

Besides this qualitative progression, the book carries other marks of unity and central planning. Mr. Hyman's twelve close studies of leading methodologists are preceded by a valuable survey of "Modern Literary Criticism" in its nature and its ancestry, and the book is concluded with an extremely interesting chapter entitled "Attempts at Integration," concerned first with "the ideal critic" and then with "the actual critic" and suggesting suitable programs of action for both.

The twelve essays on critics, each about thirty pages in length, are similarly organized. Each one places its subject in the general field according to his methodology, offers a careful synopsis of his critical writing in sequence, relates his method first to his predecessors and precursors in it and then to contemporaries employing various forms of it, and assesses his major faults or virtues with a glance at his present status and a judgment on the further promise of his method. Where the critic has written notably in other forms—as with Wilson, Eliot, Empson, Winters, and Burke—Hyman takes this other work, usually fiction or poetry into account, though with no consistency of emphasis or obvious proportion. In the essays on Wilson and Brooks, where his purpose of expounding methods is subordinate to his desire to discredit their practitioners, he turns their own methods of study against them in his final assessment with more or less damaging results.

This latter point is a singular feature in a book which is otherwise distinguished for a generosity of spirit and a large tolerance of divergent aims and methodologies. With the first four of his subjects—Wilson, Winters, Eliot, and Brooks—Hyman is prevalently interested in reducing their claims and debunk-

\*Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948.

ing their reputations in some or all circles. In his treatment of Winters and of Eliot, no strong animus is apparent, though the ultimate result is a discounting of their significance. There is, however, all too much animus evident in his studies of Wilson and Van Wyck Brooks. The attack on Wilson, I believe, is unjustifiably personal, following as it does hard upon the admission that his work has been "invaluable" in introducing a whole literary generation to "a whole new area of literature." I find particularly strange in a book of this general tone the punitively detailed identification of Wilson with the week-ending hero of his "The Princess with the Golden Hair." And only the desire to inflict mortal injury seems to account for several highly dubious charges of plagiarism.

This largely pointless attack upon Wilson seems to me the result of indignation over the fact that Wilson is widely read but Empson, Blackmur, Burke, and Richards are not. Mr. Hyman is too scrupulous and too candid, and basically too generous, to push one set of critics down in order that another set may be exalted; but I cannot help feeling that much of his hostility toward Wilson and Brooks is not explicable simply as an affair of superior and inferior methodologies or the practise of them. In a footnote in this connection Hyman observes that "Wilson's work still has what seems to me an abnormally inflated reputation." In America, he says, Wilson has been praised by F. O. Matthiessen and R. P. Blackmur, "men immeasurably his superiors." And regarding Wilson's reputation elsewhere, Hyman says: "Whatever the reason, it is to be hoped that a state of affairs wherein Edmund Wilson is the living American critic whose work is familiar to English writers, while that of say Kenneth Burke and Blackmur is largely not, will not continue indefinitely."

By including in his twelve essays on exemplary critics accounts of other critics with similar methods, Mr. Hyman is able to give at least brief analyses and evaluations of nearly every English and American critic of any reputation and of several who have eluded the attention of practically every one but Mr. Hyman. Though he does not study them in detail, he refers often to John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, Malcolm Cowley, and V. L. Parrington. In the course of analyzing particular methodologies, he examines rather closely the expressed and implied attitudes toward literature of Freud, Marx, Lenin, Taine, Plato, Aristotle, Coleridge, and many other system-makers of large ideological scope from the dawn of criticism to the present time. His attention to Coleridge is recurrent enough to justify giving him a place in the panel, though he is usually brought in for his bearing upon other men. And in fact, Hyman says, "only the inadequacy of the knowledge available to him kept Coleridge from founding modern criticism then and there."

Hyman's concern is almost entirely with English and American critics, although he speaks of French, German, and Italian thinkers of the Nineteenth Century and earlier, and although his study of Marxian criticism leads him to give some account of Russian critics, both pre-Soviet and contemporary. Hyman's method, moreover, precludes any attention to the students of general aesthetics—Croce is mentioned once and then only as an item in the widely ranging bibliography of Christopher Caudwell; and what references there are to academic scholarship are mostly unfavorable, although major and generally favorable emphasis is put upon Caroline Spurgeon and a few other scholars like John L. Lowes and A. C. Bradley are mentioned approvingly, especially in those aspects of their work which have aroused the ire of some colleagues.

I do not want at all to suggest that Hyman has not given us enough. His book is certainly the ablest and most comprehensive treatment of contemporary criticism which has, to my knowledge, so far appeared. I have read it with much interest and much admiration; particularly do I admire Mr. Hyman's own indefatigable use of that method of hard work and painstaking inquiry which he extolls in R. P. Blackmur. However, with some of Mr. Hyman's views about the nature, the function, and the desirable future of literary criticism, I find myself in disagreement. The methods of criticism which he prefers and which he wishes to see paramount are in the main those which, while wishing to see them respected and pursued, I should not wish to see paramount.

The tendency of *The Armed Vision* is such that it might be alternately subtitled "Toward Pluralism" or "Toward Kenneth Burke." The tendency starts with Hyman's definition of modern criticism as: "the organized use of non-literary techniques and bodies of knowledge to obtain insights into literature." By this use, he believes, modern criticism is "qualitatively different from any previous criticism." He amplifies this distinctiveness as follows: "The non-literary techniques are things like psychoanalytic associations or semantic translations, the non-literary bodies of knowledge range from the ritual patterns of savages to the nature of capitalist society. And all of these result in a kind of close reading and detailed attention to the text that can only be understood on the analogy of microscopic analysis." Following this definition, it is easy to see that the most approved modern critics will turn out to be the four with whom Mr. Hyman concludes his series, Blackmur, Empson, Richards, and Burke, with Burke as the most satisfactory of these. Hyman regards Blackmur as "enlisted under Burke's banner," and Empson as a disciple of Richards. Between Burke and Richards Hyman finds "an effective division of labor," explaining that "the men who are (to my mind at least) the two foremost contemporary literary critics have respectively specialized in art-as-communication and art-as-expression and between the two of them have pretty well licked the platter clean." So, although Mr. Hyman does not find unity among the four, he intimates a certain convergence.

My feeling is that in his enthusiasm for non-literary techniques like psychoanalytic associations and semantic translations and for non-literary bodies of knowledge like the ritual patterns of savages Mr. Hyman waives or slights the crucial question of how all these, as he says, "will result in a kind of close reading and detailed attention to the text." I have misgivings, for instance, when after listing I. A. Richards' various specialties—he has been a centrist psychologist but he has drawn impartially on "physiological and neurological psychology, behaviorism, Pavlov's conditioned-reflex psychology, psychoanalysis, Gestalt," and he has been in addition "a teacher, something of a Sinologist, logician, educational theorist, and linguist"—Hyman concludes the impressive list by hailing Richards as one who, "until a decade ago, was incidentally the greatest and most important of practicing professional literary critics." The word which bothers me is the word "incidentally," which I find pregnant with Empsonian ambiguity.

The ambiguity is further darkened by the even more extended list of requirements which Hyman poses for the ideal critic in his Conclusion. "He would," Hyman says, "in short, do everything possible with a work of literature. For a brief lyric, as can be imagined, this would result in a tome of several volumes;

for a more elaborate work, a long poem, play, or novel, it would obviously be a life study." Then in six or seven hundred words Hyman gives the categories of everything it is possible for the ideal critic to do, which I am obliged to condense as follows:

He would tell what the poem is about . . . He would relate it to its sources and analogues in earlier literature . . . He would analyze it exhaustively in terms of any available biographical information about the author . . . He would find its folk sources and analogues . . . He would interpret it psychologically as an expression of the author's deepest wishes and fears . . . He would interpret the poem socially as a complex and interacting reflection of the poet's social class, status, and occupation . . . He would turn all the vast resources of literary scholarship on it, or utilize all that had already been done, and follow the conclusions through with a quite unscholarly courage and imagination. He would explore at the greatest possible length its diction and the relevant ambiguous possibilities of meaning and relations in the significant words . . . He would study all the things outside the poem to which it makes reference and interpret it in their light. He would explore and categorize the key attitude that arises out of the interrelationship of the poem's content and form . . . Our ideal critic would investigate the whole problem of what the poem communicates, how, and to whom . . . He would investigate the whole problem of symbolic action in the poem . . . He would discuss a vast number of other problems involved in the poem, far too many to be even listed . . . He would place the poem in the development of the author's writing . . . Finally, on the basis of all this analysis, our ideal critic would subjectively evaluate the poem and its parts aesthetically in relation to aim, scope and validity of aim, and degree of accomplishment, place its value in terms of comparable works by the same poet and others, estimate its present and future significance and popularity, assign praise or blame, and, if he cared to, advise the reader or writer or both about it.

That is the list. Mr. Hyman makes it clear that he sees the humorous features of this encyclopediac assignment. He is willing to demolish the ideal critic, though retaining him on the higher plane of a "Platonic archetype." He believes however, that Kenneth Burke has done all of these things at one time or another and usually does some of them in conjunction. And he holds out the hope that they may be done collectively through a "symposium" or a "continuum" criticism, which, as he says, "would have the virtue not only of establishing a multiplicity of readings and meanings, but also of giving them all a hearing; and in the last analysis of establishing some true and valid ones." This collective method would form, he believes, "a genuine dialectic contest or *agon*." And from it, he asserts, "truth will arise."

Well, this is what I mean by the slogan "toward pluralism." Do everything possible, and something—perhaps much—will turn out to be true. Granted that collective action will produce truth—and subjective truth at that, I suppose, if the final step in the critical analysis is subjective evaluation. Granted that collective action will produce truth, can collective action know it? I do not think so. The nearer this pyramid-building rises toward its hypothetical apex, the more it undergoes a semantic translation into a multi-methodological, pluri-signific, multi-lingual Tower of Babel.

Mr. Hyman's zeal is very much like Arnold's study of perfection. It is ad-

mirable, even though it is literature-worship disguised as science. But I do not think this pluralistic road is the only one or ones to heaven—and if there is a shorter, more direct one, I should like to find it. Hyman is disturbed by the thought of mysticism whenever it comes up in his book ; and he rebukes a number of his critics for it, Miss Bodkin, Miss Spurgeon, and R. P. Blackmur. But surely it is mysticism of an ineffable sort which can contemplate study of any poem apparently with all the methodological procedures he has enumerated and then, at long last, "on the basis of all this analysis . . . subjectively evaluate the poem." Is every poem a vessel of the same displacement and burden ? How can subjective evaluation take place on the "basis" of all this analysis ? Would not the achievement of such a basis be a first-class metaphysical triumph, a true hypostasis ?

In the absence of that, I cannot conceive that a subjective evaluation takes place on the basis of anything except subjectivity and its immediate object. To use a trivial analogy, how would we evaluate an apple on the basis of an exhaustive horticultural and agronomical analysis ? We would find out about the soil, the tree, related trees, the sprays, the weather, and the personalities of the grower and of related growers. Then we would eat the apple and subjectively evaluate it as sweet, sour, juicy, mellow, firm, soft, etc. Some ambiguities might appear, the age being a crafty one and horticulturally advanced. But how much of the subjective evaluation of the product is dependent upon the investigation of the productive factors ?

I agree with R. P. Blackmur's saying, as Hyman quotes him : "Some critics make a new work of art ; some are psychologists ; some mystics ; some politicians and reformers ; a few philosophers and literary critics altogether. It is possible to write about art from all these attitudes, but only the last two produce anything properly called criticism ; criticism, that is without a vitiating bias away from the subject in hand. The bastard kinds of criticism can have only a morphological and statistical relation to literature ; as the chemistry of ivory to a game of chess."

This "vitiating bias away from the subject in hand" is the prime ill, I think, to which scientific criticism is heir. Hyman has uncovered it without, I believe, recognizing it in Richards' giving himself over to propaganda for Basic English. Hyman regards this deliverance as an eccentric "renunciation in favor of saving the world by panacea." I regard it as a logical and virtually inescapable development of his kind of interest in literature. If the road to truth is the ascertainment of the symbols of experience, then truth will repose in the citadel of an infallible symbol system. Richards has apparently discovered a basis for all of his analysis and finds it, no wonder, a fulcrum for disposing of much weightier things than poetry. If it were not Basic English, it would be something else equally unliterary.

In the last analysis, the analyst believes in analysis. Hyman notes with amusement that Kenneth Burke often refers to the dictionary as the "good book." He is struck by Burke's antipathy to technology and machine civilization, and he quotes someone as saying that Burke 'would like to have lived in Confucian China.' I have a great respect for both Burke and Richards ; they have a great deal to teach of value about psychology, anthropology, semantics, and verbal systems ; I do not believe that they are the law and the prophets for the study

of literature now or at any conceivable time. Their appearance and happy concurrence at this time may suggest that we are now in the scholastic era of the worship of literature. Or is Burke in the scholastic age while Richards has arrived at the Protestant Reformation?

The issue for modern criticism, I believe, is whether it shall content itself with the status of an imperfect art or whether it aspires to become a perfect science. As an art, it will remain always mediate, often menial, usually amateurish. As a science, it may gain the whole world but it will surely lose literature.

Properly, the critic, I believe, can be either the artist gossiping about the campaign just finished, or the strategist propagandizing for his favorite weapon ; or he can be the witness, friendly or magisterial, the playgoer who is the mirror to the cast and an accessory conscience to author and director. I think of the work of art as something like a play when it is not simply that. It is a public performance in a place as public as the artist can make it. Any criticism which strays too far from the theatre of art will find beaten paths to pursue either to the museum or to the laboratory, perhaps today again even to the cathedral. For the practising critic, each of these is no doubt a good place to visit ; but he must guard against the time that the key turns in the door.



## WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

### The Sale

*Why should I, who know the cost so well,  
Denounce the sale if you contrive to sell?*

*And why, over riding my extreme objections  
Should you, for that, be forfeit my affections?*

*You are yourself and shall remain so still  
And I be I, come world end when it will.*

## GRANVILLE HICKS

### Political Interlude

While my wife and I were driving across the country, we were only once in serious trouble, and then I didn't have sense enough to be worried. We were going through a piece of construction in Montana, and pulled over on the shoulder or what was going to be the shoulder some day, to get out of the way of a bulldozer. We had sat there for thirty seconds or so when I realized that the shoulder was crumbling and that we were slipping into a gully twenty feet deep. So far as I can tell now, we were not in acute physical danger, but the car would have been badly battered and we might have been laid up for several days. If I didn't worry, it was because I felt that this couldn't happen to me. I don't mean that I believed myself to be favored in some special way. It just seemed to me that if cars could go tumbling into gullies, the whole tourist business would collapse, and obviously the State of Montana wouldn't let anything like that happen. (Hadn't they stopped us at the border in order to tell us how much they appreciated our being there?) It was only after I got the car back on the road, without hitting the bulldozer, that I realized how close we had been to the bottom of that gully.

It was the same way with the subpoena. The young man in the lobby seemed to be looking for someone, and I assumed that he was looking for me. As I advanced towards him, he came towards me, and we went through the usual business of recognition. I was scheduled to give a lecture in fifteen minutes, and I suggested that we had better hurry. Mr. Coleman—he had mentioned his name as we shook hands—looked startled. "I'm not . . ." he said. "That is, I'm from the Canwell committee." Embarrassed, he thrust a folded piece of brown paper into my hand, and I realized that for the first time in my life I had been served a subpoena.

"You probably know about the Canwell committee," Mr. Coleman began tentatively. I didn't, to tell the truth, know very much, but I suspected a good deal. I had read only newspaper headlines in the few hours I had been in Seattle, but the headlines told me that the Red hunt was on, and I could guess the rest.

I unfolded the brown paper, found a typewritten sheet inside, and learned that I was "commanded to appear and attend before the Joint Legislative Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in the State of Washington" and "there to remain until discharged by said committee."

"It's only a formality," Coleman said.

The extraordinary thing is that I believed him. I had traveled more than three thousand miles to deliver some lectures, and it seemed to me just plain common sense that I would deliver them, even though the document I held in my hand said specifically that I could be kept sitting around the 146th Field Artillery Armory all that week and perhaps for weeks to come. Even at that moment I was chiefly worried about my first lecture, and while Mr. Coleman was talk-

ing, I was looking around the lobby for the right young man, the one who was to guide me to the campus.

Perhaps Mr. Coleman was disconcerted by my apparent composure, for which there was certainly no justification, or it may be that he was ashamed, as he later intimated, of his violation of Pacific Northwest hospitality. At any rate he obviously felt worse about the whole business than I did, and I began to wonder, while keeping track of the time, how I could let him down easy and get rid of him.

His story was that his boss, a man named Houston, would like to talk to me. I perceived that I was supposed to tremble at the name of Houston, but I had never heard of the man, and I wasn't in an impressionable mood. I said that I should be glad to talk to Mr. Houston, but I had an exacting schedule, and it might be difficult to find a convenient time. Mr. Houston, Coleman told me, quick to defend the boss's honor, was also a very busy man. There we were, then, at an impasse, and I was quite willing to let matters drop, but Coleman was hanging on. Another young man had entered the lobby and was looking for someone, and I thought he might be my man, as indeed he was. "I'm free between five-thirty and eighty-thirty tomorrow," I said to Coleman, practically over my shoulder.

"I'll talk with Mr. Houston and call you," he shouted back.

As I was being driven to the campus, I was mostly troubled by the fact that I was going to be late, but I did wonder once or twice whether I had taken too much for granted. After all, the subpoena said that I was to report at the armory that morning and that if I failed to do so I would be "deemed guilty of contempt and liable to fine and imprisonment until the fine is paid, and also liable to pay all loss and damage occasioned by such failure." That last clause, I supposed, meant that I might be charged for the renting of the armory if the hearings had to be postponed because I wasn't present, and there were probably other substantial items. However, I was soon on the lecture platform, and since no officers arrived to drag me away, I got on with the business at hand.

When we returned to the hotel late that night, there was a message from Mr. Coleman. Certain parties, he discreetly said, would be able to talk to me the next day, and he would pick me up at six-thirty.

My schedule was exacting enough to leave little time for minor anxieties, and although I knew that I ought to think about what I was going to say to Mr. Houston, I never had a chance. Six-thirty arrived, and my wife and I were in the lobby, and Mr. Coleman came for us. Operating on a well-known theory for the warding off of mishaps, I told myself that I was certainly going to spend the next morning, not in Guggenheim Hall, but in the 146th Field Artillery Armory, but I didn't believe it.

From the University to the City Center is five miles, and Mr. Coleman had plenty of time to brief us, but he doled out his information from traffic light to traffic light. He told us to begin with, that we would be eating at Washington Athletic Club, and, when we failed to react, expatiated on the reputation of the club's cuisine. He then said that Mr. Houston was giving a little luncheon—that was the term Mr. Coleman used then and thereafter—and that Representative Canwell, the committee's chairman, would be present. In fact, he confided a few blocks farther on, the whole committee would be on hand. I felt

that this was more attention than I could possibly deserve, and my wife, who hadn't really been invited at all, except rather insistently by me, was growing more and more uncomfortable. Mr. Coleman repeated the assurance that it would be a very fine luncheon, and I didn't try to tell him how poor an appetite I had.

By that time, of course, I knew that the show had gone on without me, for I had carefully read the newspaper accounts of two days' hearings. The star witness at the first session had been J. B. Matthews, erstwhile chief investigator for the Dies Committee. Although this one-day stand in Seattle seemed rather a come-down for Matthews, he had turned in a top-notch performance, out-distancing all previous estimates of the spread of Communism. Only the prompt intervention of the chairman, I gathered, had prevented him from expressing alarming doubts about the ideological soundness of the new president of Columbia University. He had been followed by another expert on Communism, Howard Rushmore, once of the *Daily Worker* and later of the *New York American*. Between experts, various local witnesses had been subjected to a good deal of shoving around by the Mr. Houston who was so eager to have a talk with me.

When we reached the Athletic Club, Coleman introduced us to a State Senator named Bienz, and cleared out. He said something about having promised his wife that for once he would eat at home, but I am afraid that he hadn't been invited to Mr. Houston's luncheon. Or maybe he had some private investigating to do.

The senator took us upstairs, through the main dining room, and into a private dining room that seemed to me about half the size of Carnegie Hall. There was a large oval table, with places—or so I thought at the time—for at least a hundred persons. Liquor was being served at one end of the room, and twenty or thirty men and, to my wife's relief, women were standing around and talking and drinking.

The senator introduced us at once to Mr. Houston. I can remember only that he was large, dark, and, with his drink in his hand, considerably more a man of distinction than the various legislators whom he subsequently pointed out to us. He was also resolutely but not unconvincingly affable. He led us to the bar, and though I knew that this was no time for over-indulgence, I also knew that one drink or maybe two would be a help.

When we had our Scotch and water, Mr. Houston guided us to a corner, away from all the other people, and started talking. I soon discovered that he knew little about me except that I had written some books and had once been a mildly notorious member of the Communist party, an editor of the *New Masses* and so on. I was relieved, not because I had much to hide but because it was pretty obvious that he was merely fishing. I had to admit that I was hooked, but I could hope that he was going to decide to throw me back.

From the beginning Mr. Houston took a tone of gay comraderie, in keeping with the festive nature of the occasion. Just to make me feel at home, he told me that he himself had once been on the verge of joining the Communist party. He was a Texan, he said, and back in the thirties he had quite a name as a liberal lawyer and a friend of radical causes. Then Bob Minor came along. Did I know Bob? Certainly I knew him by reputation—a very able cartoonist turned politician, long a Communist stalwart but discredited in 1945 as an

adherent of Earl Browder's heresies. Well, Bob was working on him, and he had been about ready to sign up when Bob made some insulting comments on Texas. "I'm a Texan first, last, and all the time," Mr. Houston said, "and that was too much for me."

I asked him how he had happened to subpoena me; and he assured me with a knowing smile that it had been a great coincidence. He had of course been aware that I was a leading authority on the menace of Communism in education, and for some time he had been trying to locate me. There were persons in the East, he said, who worked with him, and they had traced me as far as Providence, but there the trail ended—as well it might have, since I have never lived in that city and have spent only as much time in it as foul traffic conditions demand of any person who drives through it. I permitted myself the snobbishness of saying that my address could be found in various documents that were available in most public libraries, but I must admit that, if he had been searching for me, he would probably have proceeded in just such a round-about and ineffectual way as he described. I have been given the impression by FBI investigators that there is a rule against looking anything up in a book. At any rate, Mr. Houston said triumphantly, while they were in the midst of this difficult quest, I had shown up in Seattle.

More and more people were arriving all the time, and occasionally someone would come over and congratulate Mr. Houston on the fine job he was doing. When this happened, I was reminded that the gathering was in some way connected with the investigation of subversive activities on the campus of the University of Washington, but in between times I would forget. I really had the feeling that Mr. Houston and I were carrying on a private discussion in some wholly unsuitable public place, perhaps, say, at the annual ladies' night of the Lions Club. Finally I asked him who all these people were, and he told me that they were members of the Canwell committee and members of the Tolland committee, its opposite number in California. "They've come to see how we do it," he said. "They haven't done so well down there."

After the first shock, I realized that I had been given an extraordinary opportunity; here were two state committees on un-American activities, complete with wives, star witnesses, and other guests, and in a relaxed, even playful mood. But I had no chance to study them, for Mr. Houston, in spite of increasingly frequent interruptions and the rising pitch of competing conversations, stuck to his job. "About that subpoena," he said with a hearty laugh. "I couldn't make up my mind whether to be polite or play safe." He laughed again. "I decided to play safe."

Even after so flatfooted a reminder, I didn't quite believe that I was going to end up in the armory, but I knew that I had better abandon any notion of studying legislative folkways and get down to business. I stated, truthfully, that I knew nothing about the University of Washington except that it was paying me a certain sum of money to deliver a certain number of lectures. That didn't matter, Mr. Houston rejoined; I need only testify that Communism was a danger in education. The point had to be established in people's minds, and I was the one to establish it. He did not actually speak of the headlines that would appear in the Seattle papers, but I am sure that we were both visualizing them, with dissimilar emotions.

Just as I was about to remind him that I had had no contact with the Communist party for a considerable period of time, I became conscious of a little stir in the now large and moderately noisy crowd. "Oh," Mr. Houston said, with a suggestion of awe in his voice, "here's Dr. Matthews." He came towards us, stout and bland, with a little boy of six or seven tagging after him. Mr. Houston asked if we had ever met and Dr. Matthews didn't seem to know. I wasn't sure myself, but I had a memory of Matthews as chairman of the first conference of the American League Against War and Fascism, one of the earliest and most effective of those Communist fronts concerning which he had subsequently become so well informed.

The little boy was pretty lively, and, to make conversation, I asked his name. "Martin," he said. His father looked at me to see if I caught on, and then said, proudly, "After Martin Dies."

Representative Canwell, I believe, had joined us at this point, and Mr. Houston, obviously as proud of his visiting expert as the expert was of young Martin, ingeniously managed a reference to the number of academic degrees held by Dr. Matthews. I think he said the number was thirteen, but I lost count when Matthews rattled off the initials. I tried to rise to the occasion by showing that I knew what S.T.D. stood for, but that was my only contribution. Mr. Houston returned to the attack, but I did overhear Mr. Canwell hospitably urging Matthews to spend a week or two on his farm near Spokane.

Dr. Matthews, I may say, acted in a very friendly manner towards me, and so did the other imported authority, Howard Rushmore, who arrived a little later with his pretty new wife. When I thought about it afterwards, I was surprised at their cordiality. The market for anti-Communist experts is expanding, but not, I should think, at a rate that would make a man indifferent to competition.

It had got to be seven-thirty, and I wondered when dinner was to be served, but other people didn't seem to be worried, and the atmosphere was growing more and more convivial. The gathering was still less raucous than a New York City cocktail party of comparable size, but the conversationalists and raconteurs in the various groups were making louder and louder bids for attention.

As the conviviality intensified, Mr. Houston and I were left to ourselves, and I felt that now was the time for me to get in whatever licks I was good for. I had already said that I had no affection for the Communist party and not much tolerance for Communists and fellow-travelers. Anyone who had been a member of the party, I had admitted, could not take an attitude of neutrality towards it; if he ceased to be for it, he had to be against it, because that was the way the party was. Still and all—and this was the one phrase I had been able to formulate in advance—I would certainly be happier and he, Mr. Houston, would quite possibly be just as happy if I didn't testify.

Intimating that he was hurt but not discouraged, Mr. Houston asked me if I didn't think he had conducted the hearings with admirable discretion. That was not my impression, but the moment was unpropitious for absolute frankness, and I contented myself with commenting on the meager results that had thus far been achieved. The five or six professors on whom he had convincingly fastened the Communist label, I pointed out, had apparently been known as

Reds for many years, and he had simply proven the obvious at the expense of besmirching a considerable number of quite possibly innocent teachers.

If the situation had been less ticklish, I could have gone further and told him that this particular celebration was not calculated to increase my goodwill towards the committee but, on the contrary, had succeeded in arousing in me more sympathy than I had felt towards any group of Communists in a matter of nine years. I knew none of the campus Reds, but I had only to read the accounts of the hearings to realize that I had once known many persons who were a good deal like these. They were not, for me, congenial characters, but had their good points, and though they might have deserved martyrdom and certainly were asking for it, I couldn't feel happy about this kind of Roman holiday.

Such comment I made on the nature of campus radicals set Mr. Houston off, and he began to expound his psychological theory of Communism. Communists, he had learned, were warped souls, and he told a series of stories about the traumatic experiences that were responsible for various Communists he had known. These tales were edifying, but they had no apparent bearing on the problem of my appearing as a witness.

Feeling that he was reaching his last line of defense, I ventured to point out that I was due at the university in not much more than half an hour. He didn't say, "So what?" He didn't say, "O. K., we'll continue this discussion in the armory at nine o'clock tomorrow morning." Instead, with perfect Texan chivalry, he rushed to confer with the head waitress, and in a minute or two he and I and my wife and Senator Bienz were sitting at the far end of the long table.

Mr. Canwell and others began to move through the throng, suggesting that dinner was about to be served, and the groups broke up reluctantly. A Washington representative took a last drink, toasting his California counterpart and their collaboration in the good fight. I heard Senator Bienz say to my wife, "Isn't it wonderful to think that all these good people are working for the cause?"

Houston was interrupted for a moment, and I looked the crowd over. There were two or three legislators who couldn't be mistaken, and probably didn't want to be mistaken, for anything but farmers. The others, almost without exception, looked like small-town business men. My wife said afterwards that the group seemed to her somehow sinister. I admit that she had a better chance to study it than I did, but I still think she was wrong. I think it was a perfectly representative bunch of second-string politicians, and some day when the New York State legislature is in session, I'm going to take her to Albany and prove my point.

Plates were set before us but even if the steak hadn't been tough, we wouldn't have had time to eat much of it, for it was 8:15 and Mr. Coleman was at the door. Mr. Houston remained firm and polite, and went on talking to the very end. "You'll be hearing from us," he said as he shook my hand. Some, though by no means all, of the guests had been served by the time we left, and they were commenting, with courteous but unwarranted enthusiasm, on the steak.

I learned the next day that, immediately after I had gone, Mr. Houston told a member of the committee that he was not going to call me. He used, I heard, an epithet that reflected on my ancestry, but I took it as a compliment.

The week went by, and to the best of my ability I did the job for which I

was being paid, without let or hindrance from the Canwell committee. My confidence grew, and when the committee unexpectedly recessed on Friday, I felt quite sure of myself. But I didn't say "I told you so" to my wife until 3:15 on Sunday, when we crossed the Oregon line, and even as I said it, I glanced at the rearview mirror to see if there were any Washington state troopers behind me.

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How long ago it seems! I wrote my account of the episode for my fellow-easterners, but they weren't interested—or various editors thought they wouldn't be, which amounts to the same thing. I laid the article aside, and I might have forgotten the incident if there had not been occasional reminders. In October 1948, for instance, I read a newspaper story about a plan to "get" President Eisenhower, and I realized that Matthews' attack had not been quite so spontaneous and addlepated as I had supposed. Then I heard that Canwell was organizing an eleven-state committee on un-American activities, and I understood that our little luncheon had been more than a garish festivity. And some time after the event I got word that both Canwell and Bienz had failed of re-election.

The news about Canwell and Bienz, when coupled with a more general elation induced by the results of the voting in November, really did make me feel that the episode was closed. I knew, to be sure, that a university committee was holding hearings, but the affair was never mentioned in eastern newspapers, and it came to seem so remote that I sometimes wondered if the subpoena and the dinner hadn't belonged to an Alice-in-Wonderland dream.

Then one winter night, over a local station, came the news that three University of Washington professors had been dismissed and three others placed on probation. The *New York Times* ran a series of articles on the case, and every newspaper and periodical I picked up mentioned it. The whole issue of Communists as college teachers was discussed on the radio, with President Allen taking part.

I hoped that someone in the audience would ask President Allen if he had never suspected that there were Communists on the faculty before the Canwell committee began its investigation. If he did, and did nothing about them, he was curiously unfaithful to the principles he now advocates. If he did not, he is less astute than I had imagined.

Three men have been fired, and three others have been put in such a humiliating position that I wonder how effective their teaching can be. The academic routine, I gather, was badly disrupted during the many months that the faculty committee was in session, and I don't suppose that stability will be recaptured in the near future. Some apparently innocent men and women were besmirched, and many others probably got badly scared. A lot of damage has been done, more damage than any three Communists I have ever known could have accomplished under the most favorable circumstances. Now, even more than last July, it seems like a bad deal. The point as I now see it is not that I didn't slip into the gully but that various other individuals, and in a sense a whole institution, did. Surely there must be better ways of carrying on road repairs.

### Escape from Freedom

*In twilight the man gropes slowly through memory  
slowly, slowly, and yet there is time  
for prison clocks keep hours, not the slow years  
massing their weight against a life.*

*He sees each day the courtyard elm in the summery dust  
hearing elms simmer in the noons gone by  
for the trees are all alive upon the free earth, without him,  
moving ringward through their journey, branching outward through the sky,*

*While he moves inward through the slow ballet of his dying  
somnambulant, withdrawn, in a twilight of time  
where the images of life blur into the stagnant darkness  
of his body, existing in its endless idiot rhyme.*

*But he has that freedom so many have craved  
and he is near that garden most have loved and few have shunned;  
the pale sunflowers of insanity wave  
in the backcourts of his mind, turning slowly with the sun*

*Of the wild unworld: O he is homesick for the grave  
courage is his at last, and the pink tongues of dust  
speak of a healing silence—Yet again again again  
the caged beast crawls towards the world he has lost*

*And what is his struggle, and what the world he gains  
for what consummation does the sensitive brain  
build fragments from fragments—where can the pain  
lead him at least across the waste of empty lust?*

*To the endless Spring of all our old imaginings,  
the daydream of freedom, and the damned loves lost.*

## The Challenger and the Neo-Babbitts

For the last two centuries Europeans have been coming to the New World as observers and then returning home to write about what they have seen. So inevitably have books followed such excursions that Harold Laski when he wrote *The American Democracy*\* was not so much observing a tradition as fulfilling a duty. Like two of his most distinguished predecessors, Tocqueville and Bryce, Mr. Laski has attempted to describe the *genius loci* in its political, economic, and cultural manifestations. His study is particularly impressive, not only because he has the trained eye of the practical social scientist, but because he knows America and Americans from first hand experience. One-third of his adult life has been spent teaching in American colleges, and, for an even longer period, he has been personally acquainted with and, for the purposes of this study, assisted by some of our most distinguished public administrators, historians, journalists, educators, lawyers, and business men.

It is a much discussed anomaly that today when the world possesses every possible facility for rapid communication, information is still siphoned out discreetly in unsatisfying driblets. We know, for example, ridiculously little about the people of other nations, the way they live, the immediate nature of their social institutions, and they know correspondingly little about us. *The American Democracy*—with its long and often too detailed chapters on the American spirit; our federal, state, and local governments; our culture, business, labor, religion, education, and professions; our domestic and foreign relations—represents an attempt to bridge this gap, at least as far as the United States is concerned. One could wish for equally complete studies of England, Russia, Germany, and France.

Since he has been trained in the tradition of Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and the Webbs, Mr. Laski does more than describe social phenomenon; he interprets it. And his interpretation soon becomes a creed, his thesis a prophetic cry dominating every chapter of his book. There is nothing particularly new about his thesis. Such diverse critics of America as Tocqueville, Harriet Martineau, Mrs. Trollope, Harold Stearns, and Cyril Connolly have either said it or implied it many times before. But Mr. Laski says it better and he documents it beyond hope of refutation.

America, Mr. Laski believes, began as a political democracy and, with the impetus of free land and the American dream, seemed well on its way to becoming a truly egalitarian society. After the Civil War, however, the balance of American life shifted from agriculture to industry. Control was accordingly seized by the heroes of the new era, the business men—singularly anarchistic individuals who demanded power without responsibility, who equated acquisition with justice, and who subverted the American dream to their own purposes.

\*Harold Laski, *The American Democracy*, Viking Press, 1948.

"Individual opportunity," for example, became the right of survival for those who proved themselves strongest in business competition; "free enterprise" became freedom for corporate enterprise etc. Americans now pay lip service to ideals which have no reference to reality; the American dream has become "a dead mythology which gives them no real clue to the life that lies before them." In this gap which Mr. Laski sees widening daily between theory and practice, the democratic principle has been lost. America is in danger as well of losing the dynamic quality which made her unique among nations, and if that happens, Mr. Laski believes that America will find herself subject to the same forces of decay and defeat which dominate the Old World. Only by closing that gap —by redefining American life "in terms of what man is, not what man has" and reconciling moral and material aims—can democracy be recovered and the Western world saved from destruction.

Clearly Mr. Laski sees the business man as the scapegoat. It is he who has "destroyed civilizations, wasted the natural resources of whole continents and made life a mean and pitiful thing for millions"; it is he who has "an outlook for which it is difficult to find any other word than totalitarian." "The accepted values of American civilization have been more decisively defined by the business man than by any other figure." In other words, it is the business man who has, through his close control of the press, radio, movies, church, and educational system, made us into a schizophrenic nation and deprived us of our birth-right. Finally, Mr. Laski warns us that "the business man seeks to insist that the rebel against his power is a rebel against Nature"; he builds his power upon a "*mystique* which is not open to national examination." Consequently that expansion of well-being which is necessary for the artistic and physical health of a people "has become a threat to the supremacy of the business man (which) he is compelled to frustrate."

Mr. Laski pulls no punches and it is perhaps not surprising that the response to his book should be hostile. Americans have always been defensive about what James Russell Lowell called that "certain condescension in foreigners." Even today critical relations between the United States and Britain are not cordial enough to permit the acceptance of such a diagnosis and prescription. Mr. Laski may be the best doctor for the case, but American critics make it quite clear that they did not call him in.

It is interesting that Mr. Laski's indictment of the business man has been the rallying point for most of his opponents. Little attention has been given to his excellent descriptions of our social institutions, his attempt to fit the American experience into a wider frame of reference, or his genuine solicitude over the fate of the democratic principle. The critics, for the most part, have limited themselves to as spirited a defense of the business man and as violent an attack on his detractor as have appeared in this country since the Twenties. John Chamberlain in his article "The Business Man in Fiction" in the November *Fortune* refers to Mr. Laski as a "pontifical and insufferable little know-it-all" and speaks darkly of "upstarts from foreign parts who come over here to try to tell us how to run our business."

At first glance, Mr. Chamberlain's assault, scurrilous though it is, seems merely another chapter in the long history of American counter-attacks on visiting critics. But he is doing more than scratching an old itch when he extends

his arraignment from Mr. Laski to a score of contemporary American novelists who have produced novels corroborating in almost every detail Mr. Laski's portrait of the business man instead of the more flattering "Men of Distinction" advertisements. "A distilled malevolence, a cold and frightening spite went into the painting of practically every fictional business man," Mr. Chamberlain believes, from Drieser's *Cowperwood* trilogy to Mailer's *Naked and the Dead*. All these novelists are "emotional and subjective"; their characters are cliches; their plots lack originality. Mr. Chamberlain asks them to return to what he calls "Parrington's critical realism" which he defines, oddly enough, as "a hearty and commonsensical way of looking at things" . . . the process of "putting corruption within a perspective that also includes the comparative honesty of most business people." Any reader familiar with Parrington can only conclude that Mr. Chamberlain's note cards were confused because he never found anything remotely like that definition in *Main Currents of American Thought*. In conclusion, Mr. Chamberlain announces that any writers who refuse to allow him to select their subject matter for them are apt to find themselves labelled "artistic camp followers of Karl Marx." With a literary Un-American Activities Committee waiting on their doorstep, Mr. Chamberlain?

It is hard to believe that the John Chamberlain of the November *Fortune* is the same John Chamberlain who waged such a courageous battle for the right of the young naturalist novelist, James Farrell, to use any subject matter necessary to his artistic purpose. The writers attacked in Mr. Chamberlain's article would do well to refer to his introduction to *Studs Lonigan*; it is as good today as it was in 1932, even though Mr. Chamberlain has apparently forgotten that he wrote it.

Mr. Chamberlain has received nods of approval from many colleagues<sup>1</sup>, but his strongest support to date has come from Mr. Harrison Smith in the *Saturday Review of Literature*<sup>2</sup>. Mr. Smith congratulates him for "taking to pieces Harold Laski's *The American Democracy*," a somewhat dubious compliment. Apart from the invective quoted above, Mr. Chamberlain made no attempt to deal with the thesis of *The American Democracy* except to find Mr. Laski inconsistent because, after indicting the business man as a monster and a scoundrel, Mr. Laski admits that business men are "leaders in all charitable and religious activities." How anyone who has read either Mr. Laski's book or George Bernard Shaw could regard this argument as an invalidation of the former's thesis, I do not know.

Mr. Smith, like Mr. Chamberlain, is eager to outline the areas in which the creative writer may operate. He asks young writers to abandon "this fashion of detesting the business man" and also "their preoccupation with city slums, or barnyard dirt, or sour recollections of their companions in the war." In return he promises them "epic themes" in "the prosperity that has been harvested by the farmers of the Middlewest" or the "endless torrent of manufactures, from Diesel engines to textiles, from dynamos to plastics, poured in an endless stream from our factories . . . the five million cars and trucks, eighty-eight and a half million tons of steel, five and a half million barrels of oil a day . . . five million washing machines." Writers who prefer not to write about this inexorable ad-

<sup>1</sup> J. Donald Adams, *New York Times Book Review* section, Dec. 5, 1948; Jan. 9, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence, *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 16, 1949; "Year of the Miracle," January 22, 1949.

vance of toasters, trucks, and irons must, Mr. Smith concludes, "dislike all stories of achievement and success or be Communists." Mr. Smith's use of the term "communist" as an epithet has particular interest in view of the fact that the list of subjects considered appropriate for Russian writers published several years ago in *Pravda* by the Soviet Writers' Union was strangely akin to that drawn up by Mr. Smith in that only strong positive themes of Russian production and Russian expansion were permissible.

These two articles will have a familiar ring for readers who know literary history. For them, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Smith will become conjurers resuscitating the ghost of the village virus and bringing back Stuart Sherman's attack on Dreiser, the indignant squeals from the Middlewest which greeted the early Mencken, the Rotary Clubs' banning of Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* and *Babbitt*, the shrill denunciations of *Elmer Gantry* from the Chicago pulpits, and John S. Sumner's war on *Jurgon*. Apparently Mr. Laski has flushed a whole covey of frightened Neo-Babbitts, who, like their progenitors in the Twenties, are determined to define the novelist's subject in accordance with ideological rather than literary standards. If Babbitt and his friends sought to impose their particular brand of Puritanism on the novelist, these Neo-Babbitts would make him a literary apologist for the National Association of Manufacturers and restrict his investigations of life to the Kiplinger letters. It is truly a Land of Oz situation when reputable literary critics set up a cultural totalitarianism—a literary thought control program—uncomfortably like that which is already in force in Soviet Russia, and then implement it by denouncing as "communist" all realistic novelists. A better demonstration of the accuracy of Mr. Laski's thesis probably could not be found.



## PHILIP MURRAY

### To Certain Modern Poets

*Your verse is awkward and confusing like a fat lady in a  
revolving door,  
And poorly proportioned, an execrable piece of equestrienne  
statuary,  
One in which the man is larger than his horse;  
A tall man in a low ceilinged room is not more restless or  
uncomfortable.  
If you could somehow detach yourself from your verse—and  
the further away the better—  
Though your verse would probably still be bad, it, and not you,  
would be mostly responsible.*

## The Middle Parts of Fortune

The windows were jarring now with the artillery and when I closed the shutter we could see the light was going down. The Major was by the stove although we had not finished the game, he took off his glasses and held them to the light but he still said nothing and when he came to the table I was becoming uneasy because of what I thought he wanted to tell me. He sat down again and looked at the game on the table. A dish was vibrating on the shelf and soot came out of the stove pipe, after this the guns were quiet, there was only the wind in the stove and the sounds of our breathing in the room. Then he was talking—he gave me a cigarette, they were Russian cigarettes with gold tips—but it was not easy to hear him, I was tired, I cannot remember how long he talked, he talked a long time and it was the way I thought he would, I thought there would be the explanations, that he had wanted to tell me what they had been through, what happened and the way it was and their tiredness now. Nie kommt das Unglück ohne seinem Gefolge, he said it several times, so softly at last I couldn't hear. The odor of the cigarettes was like it is when church candles have just been smothered and the Major, exhaling slowly not taking the cigarette from his mouth, studying the game became quiet. I hoped he had said all that he wanted to. I could not understand him saying these things, he knew I was thinking there could be nothing to say. Then a long time we were quiet; and I told him about Syria, that earlier I had lived with the French in the summer in the abandoned hangars on the air field at Palmyra. He spoke the names of the places in English, in German—a moment with his goatee with these names he seemed Chasidic—and he asked if I had been to Balbek; then interrupting himself, putting on his gloves, his face without color in the failing light, he left the room, the kings and pawns and his remaining bishop on the board forgotten. I locked the door and put coal on the fire, the fire was warm against my face and I thought I was tired. I listened to the wind in the flue. Because of the wind the artillery could have been farther than it sounded. I wondered what would happen, in the camp it was what we were talking about but no one knew what would happen, there was no way of knowing. It was not as I remembered it being when we went to the front, it was not the same, if we were doing that we would know something about what we were to be afraid of but no one really knew anything. There had not been a word, finally not even more rumors, no one knew what to say. I threw the rest of the cigarette into the stove and looked at the game. I could not understand the last move with his queen and I wondered which way would be the quickest to checkmate. There were not many moves left on the board and I think I found the way it was best to do it. Lying on the bed I watched the light which was becoming yellow and I thought I could sleep.

Then, quick and not far away a small shot, a revolver, and nothing more. I do not think I moved on the bed. Something was heavy under my throat and I knew if I moved the heaviness would be broken in me. I do not know how

long it was this way, I unlocked the door and went out of the building. Major Golffing was close by the window, the snow falling already on the front of his coat, his blood darkening the ice. Biehl the sergeant, who had taken the revolver and cigarettes, went through his pockets and the others were watching. Several times at night the guards came this way. One of the others said the artillery was tanks, he said they were going farther to the north by the river. He did not know what kind of guns they were, it was still too far. The other one wondered how much longer it would be until the lights were out. I went back to the library and on the concrete steps of the building I felt what was left of the Major's glasses under my boot.

In the night I tried to lie under my overcoat but I could not sleep. I rolled my blanket and tied it onto the rucksack. The rucksack, which I had bought with cigarettes from a guard, was leather and large enough for the books I wanted and some clothing and the food I had saved. They still had not opened the crates of food and the boots from Geneva in the hallway, there was no time. In the building no one was sleeping and now there were the rocket guns, so close I could hear them over their overlapping explosions beyond the river, and closer, the machineguns. I sat by the stove listening and by counting I sometimes could hear how far the guns were firing. Sitting by the stove and counting them I went to sleep and I was dreaming, I knew there was a dream. She had put down the lantern, watching, her face beyond grief. The town was dark as wind, in the windows the swaying heads with upturned eyes, by a wall the ones with the hands of jews were laughing. She was old with eyes like moths, old and nibbling, saying it would be a black summer and I saw her frieze on the water. The light came, caterpillars like rain in the leaves, a child in the green rows, a cloud only under the mountain. We waited in a shade on an abandoned edge, a fox low in our eyes the stones still as hands. When I awoke I knew some one was in the room, I sat by the stove not moving. The light had gone down. It was Hofios opening the door of the stove.

—You snore, Hofios said.

—Did I say anything?

—No.

—This is one of the earthquakes.

—It's no earthquake, Hofios said, closing the stove.

—What do we do?

—There is nothing to do. We keep the forks out of our eyes.

—How long did I sleep?

—I don't know.

—You got through the gates?

—The guards have gone, Hofios said, some Russians are on the road.

The cracks of light from the stove moved on the floor. I went to the shutter. It was dark. Sweeney was sleeping on the bed. I heard them in the kitchen, there was the horn and a guitar.

—They're for the ears, Hofios said, clowns and acrobats.

—Sweeney should hear.

—Sweeney's asleep.

And later they came, they were drunk and talking in Russian. The first one was huge standing in the doorway and he had a pistol. The other one carrying

a Czech automatic rifle went to the bed and lit a match over Sweeney but Sweeney turned to the wall. Hofios took the top from the stove and they could see us, they were Russians with leather caps and their coats were muddy. The first one came to the stove and looked at us, he said we were Americans and took a bottle of Kirsch from his coat and they both were talking loudly. I thought they were guerrillas, they were dressed as civilians, and trying to speak to each other we finished the bottle, and they left. Sweeney was still asleep. When they had gone I locked the door again, I could taste the Kirsch, I felt it in my eyes. The musicians in the kitchen were quiet. Hofios sat on the bed against Sweeney's back watching the light on the floor, but there was an explosion. The stove pipe fell down filling the room with smoke and we burned our hands putting it together. There was another explosion, closer, and shrapnel came through the shutter breaking the window. Sweeney awake was asking what had happened.

—What is it, he said.

—Their Katushi, Hofios said, putting the top onto the stove.

—What do they think we are, Sweeney said.

—I don't know.

We went out of the buiding to the shelter. In the shelter it was crowded and the snow, turning to sleet and melting, was coming into the trenches. There were no more exposions, only now and then a machinegun, then silence, the water dripping and a few whispers, and I was dreaming again. But asleep it was cold, I could feel the wet and Hofios was shaking me. The moon had come out. I looked at him, I saw what he was watching, I saw the Germans standing around us, the Germans had come back. They were talking, standing very still watching us. They carried ratt guns and some of them wore sheepskin coats.

—I thought they were gone.

—Gone my ass, some one said.

—What can they have with us, I said.

—This is the edge of something, some one said.

—Which side are we on, I said.

—Our backs are showing baby, Hofios said.

We moved down the road, all of us, and the Italians, the Poles and Russians, and the French, all in a line together and at the sides of the line the Germans, the voices strange in the frozen light, and at the gate there were tanks. I saw the flag on one of the tanks, red with the black sign on it. The Germans although they were drunk talked in low voices. Some were paratroopers and one so helmeted screamed from the tank and the others standing around us laughed. Some of them were smoking cigarettes. Moving down the road we went the direction of the river, the moon against us and dilating the sky on the tops of the trees.

At the edge of the valley we stood motionless and when he finished talking, his glasses catching pieces of the moon, the one on the tank watched with binoculars, then behind in the trees the explosions, their guns, the sudden flashes, and in the valley the other side of the river at the bridge broke the slow flames, the bridge and that part of the river becoming concealed with the smoke, the shells echoing down the valley of the Oder, and abruptly the guns ceased. On the tank the German was talking, I did not know what he said, I saw him taking off his ear phones, and looking down at us he screamed again. The Russians were across the river, I did not understand it, they were taking us across the bridge.

The hill was steep and on the snow moving fast we became jammed together and some of them were falling down. The Germans with us were losing their grenades. We said nothing and nothing was to be heard save the sounds of us running and their equipment rattling, and on the lower parts of the hill tasting the smoke, through the line of the bent moving shadows I could see the road which goes onto the bridge, and instantly it came, the Russians across the river, their machineguns, first one, a hollow crackling, and another and all of them. Beside the embankment in the snow we entered the smoke, each crouching close to the one ahead as if to hide at his back. A shell exploded on the pavement of the road, the steel falling with pieces of concrete and ice into the snow around us, and passing a culvert, tasting bile, I saw an Italian, his leg in shreds, his face whispering out of its sleep, and I could hear Hofios swearing behind me. Going onto the road and onto the bridge in front of me a German turned, he shouted something, he fell back, his rifle fell to the pavement and I stumbled on him, scuffing the helmet which had fallen off. Bullets burned across the dark ricochetting off concrete but then it was only a single gun firing, there had been several guns but they were quiet. On the bridge were the dead. One of them, one of the Germans, clung to the wall, and a Russian, a prisoner, hanging to the twist of wire where the hole was blown into the pavement, fell to the river. An old Russian with a bleeding hand, stammering, was coming back and when he fell, Sweeney, swearing, tripped on him. A German on hands and knees was dragging back his rifle. The machinegun had stopped and we were beyond the bridge on the road. It was absurd how we were standing there on the road in the darkness shouting.

—Come off the road, a voice was shouting.

—Don't get your shit hot, some one said.

The Germans moved by us, one of them shifting a machinegun to his other shoulder. Some Italians were arguing, and crouching one close to another we went off the road into a dark declivity on the lap of the hill and we lay in the snow. Along the declivity in the darkness I asked for Sweeney but no one had seen him. I thought he might be across the road, I had not seen him. A man hawked and spat. Above on the hill Russians were talking but nothing happened. An Italian came where we lay, he said the name of some one, crawling down the line he was looking for some one, and when other Italians answered him he swore. Then Sweeney came, I heard his voice, and Hofios called him. Beside me Hofios sighed, his voice was tired.

—Jesus Jesus, he sighed, all these people.

—Where were you?

—I went the wrong way, Sweeney said.

Some one laughed.

—The Russians, Sweeney said, they got over here.

—They got over, some one said.

It was later Biehl came. He was with a German, an officer, and he told us to move back across the road, and we moved, each hanging to the next one, no one knowing where we were to move, crouching through a culvert and onto the side of the embankment, the ice at our feet. The Russians on the hill were still talking.

—It isn't much of a place, Hofios said.

—What are we doing, some one said.

—All you maggot asses, some one said loudly.

Near us on the embankment some Russians were whispering, and I could feel how far into sleep I was going. A machinegun fired from the hill and the Germans were firing, in the trees there were the small stabs of fire, quick and bright in short bursts in the darkness, and when they stopped the grenades were sudden and loud and except that some one was crying it was quiet again.

—Why was that, I said.

—They're pissy eye, Hofios said.

Hofios went over to see what had happened. It took him a long time and when he came back he said the grenades had done the job, he had never, he said, seen them do it like that.

—One went off in a Polack's lap.

—This is not a bargain.

—It's a dose of clap, Hofios said.

—The Germans had gone, Sweeney said, I thought some one said they'd gone.

—Some one said balls, Hofios said.

And on us the slow whining, the screams and the explosions, heavy guns firing a high trajectory from behind the hill. A shell erupted in the ice and on the bridge, another misfiring whinnied away. With the barrage we could hear the concrete of the bridge falling on the river. When it was quiet Hofios looked at his watch, it was half past five.

—Half past a monkey's ass, some one said, there's the god damn bridge.

—This isn't easy to understand, Sweeney said.

—No, Hofios said, it is not Switzerland.

—The blind bleeding the blind, some one said.

I watched a man grubbing out a hole with his hands, he was one of the Russians, one of the prisoners. It was becoming colder. They were coming down the hill. Near us two Germans, one with a machinegun, moved up the road. I watched the German with his hand on the action of the gun. Farther up the road they were throwing grenades, some were firing but the ones near us waited listening to the Russians on the hill, closer, watching the darkness where they were coming. One of them fired, the cartridges going out onto the ice on the road, and he stopped, and fired again, stopped and again.

—How are you, Hofios said.

—I am not good.

—Jesus brujo tonight everybody in the world.

—With two sides you said now not to be on.

On the hill a Russian was crying, he was quiet and it was silent again, the hour was divided into silences by shatterings of the gun fire, the armies on the sides of the river, and our voices if we spoke at all were solemn and anonymous, all of the voices, the opinions in the eyes. Looking into the moon we could see nothing. From the direction of the bridge a machinegun let loose a strip, the bullets close on the pavement, and we heard it, not more than a hundred yards from us, I recognized its engines and the slow sound of the tracks on the road somewhere by the bridge, I knew it could move behind us. And over the river was the dull hiss and the cough, over us a flare opened, our shadows on the em-

bankment moved across our prone unmoving bodies. I saw the ice broken on the river by the shells. The tank fired, the darkness flashed open. From the flanks, enfilading the road machineguns opened on us, made a quick silence, fired again, one, the other, both of them.

An Italian was crying.

—Oh ma mia, he cried, loudly from a distance.

On the road the moon on his face a man hopped, shot in the foot.

—They've got my shoe, the man cried.

Some one laughed. The Italian's voice went out slowly.

I went to the culvert where they were putting the wounded. Staring, his hands on his ears, Sergeant Biehl said nothing; in panic, bewildered, as if they were afraid they would be left behind, the wounded were swearing, they whimpered.

—What do we do, I said.

Biehl stared and said nothing.

—The bridge is gone.

He took his hands from his ears.

—My name is Harry, he said staring, call me Harry.

—Ma mia, the Italian moaned.

A Pole muttered.

—Shit, a man whispered, tremulous in the darkness.

The Russians on the hill were shouting. I crawled back but there was a flare again, the tank fired into the embankment, my eyes were cold, some one was falling on me, he coughed, and hunching up I felt him fall back, it was Sweeney, his face was indistinct and darkened with blood. A man sobbed, a Russian shouted on the hill. Hofios was wounded.

—My ass, Hofios said.

—How are you?

—I don't feel it, it's wet.

I put my hand behind him where the shrapnel had gone in.

—It's not bad, it tore your pants.

—Tonight, he said, they've got the aurora borealis around our asses.

I heard some one being sick. It was becoming daylight, it was almost morning and they were on the road now. I saw Sweeney's astonished face. My head ached, it was the same when they gave me the spinal tap, I had been very drunk. And we went up the embankment to the road. In the moonlight from the trees I saw them on the road. One of them, a large one with a fur hat, was saying something I could not understand. I went past the crossing by the bridge. I saw the dead on the broken scree of the bridge but not any one I knew. Their tanks, cannon with the muzzles down and the infantry on the turrets, one after another came through the frozen slush onto the embankment and the Russians who had been with us were shouting, climbing onto the tanks they laughed, they were hugging them, they dragged them to the ground and they were dancing. Back on the road machineguns fired and we went flat and on the tanks the Russians were laughing, the machineguns, some one said, were for the Germans who had been taken with us.

In the morning we were in the camp again, it was raining and the snow was thawing into mud and they were taking the wounded with the ones who had

been killed into the hallway of the building. When we came to the building the Italians were breaking open the crates we had left in the hallway, some of the Italians had not been with us in the night and when we came back they were around the crates of shoes and boxes of food, many of them, and fighting with each other, they were very loud going out the door with what they had found. When they saw us coming the Italians looked bewildered and became silent, they didn't move, then dropping what they had found they ran out of the building, they had not known we would come back and when they were gone, before the wounded were brought into the building, we took the boots and for each of us there was a box of food. Captain Straith and the two Russian surgeons worked with the wounded all day, they had a pressure lamp and operated on stretchers which were put on the emptied crates. All day in the library I could hear the wounded. There were more of them wounded and going from the camp to loot in the houses some of them were killed. All day the roads were strafed. In the library I could see the planes going down onto the fringes of the forest and the way they came again into the sky and the smoke from the bombings. The guards who had been shot by the Russian prisoners were hanging by their feet on the fence posts, behind the delousing shed little One Eye hung upside down sticking out his tongue at the slush. And Gollanin who was drunk and wearing a stove pipe hat with another Russian, a boy, went to where Major Golffing lay disinterred by the thaw, he waved his fists, he dragged off the Major's boots, and the boy, who laughed, shook the Major's stiff hand. Hofios was watching beside me at the window.

—Believe me, old boy, Hofios said, it's been grand.

Hofios limped back to the bed.

—Did they hurt you, I said.

—No he was fine, Hofios said, it was one of the Russians, he did it in less than a minute.

Hofios took the piece of shrapnel from his pocket and held it in his hand.

—But you should see the other piece, it was Italian.

—You've never showed me your wound, I said.

—No I never have, it was in much the same place.

—You have been around.

—Karata.

Gollanin was drinking from a bottle, he gave the bottle to the boy and tied the boots around his neck and they went away, they were very drunk. In the camp they were coming in with loot, suitcases and sacks of it and with carts and baby buggies and they had rifles and pieces of the German equipment. There were Russian soldiers in the camp but no one knew what we were to do. There were only a few books in the room and I broke up some of the shelves for the stove, we covered the window which had been broken by shrapnel with pieces of wood and a blanket, it was better with a blanket on the window. In the afternoon I tried to sleep on the table but I could not sleep, we were not hungry and behind the camp when they fired the rocket guns over us the shadow from our lantern moved around on the floor. Hofios on his stomach could not lie still and he went out for coal and to see if there would be food, then I was asleep on the bed, I heard Hofios when he came back to the room.

—Valon is dead, Hofios said.

—Was it last night?

—It was near the gate this afternoon.

—One of the planes.

—A sniper, Hofios said, they're still in the houses.

—What was he doing there, I said.

Hofios said nothing. I was sleeping when I heard him and I did not understand, then I was in the hallway being sick, smelling the wounded I was sick on a pile of their bandages and the uniforms which had been cut off. At the end of the hallway the dead had been covered with blankets.

It was not raining in the afternoon and before dark there were more Russians in the camp and they were shouting at us. Getting into our coats we were nervous about it, the camp was silent except for their voices.

—It's a good thing it will be dark.

—It was dark last night, Hofios said, have you the cigarettes?

—I have them in the pack, how do you feel?

—It will be all right.

We put the things from the food parcels in our pockets and there was enough bread in our blanket rolls. The dusk was silent, there were no planes and no guns and behind us Küstrin was burning. Once before dark Hofios tried to light a cigarette but he could not do it in the wind and it was hard at first for him to keep up but then he was not limping. And I saw Henri Vallon crouched in the ditch by the gate watching the ground. By the houses in the slush there were women and children, not any of them now with shoes, and a woman was hanging from a window. The Commandant's car with all of them in it was burnt up on the road. We left the road and moved to the fields and everywhere in the dusk were their tanks, the Russians sitting on them watching us. In the forest beyond the fields it was difficult, we were walking fast and ice on the ground again, and some of us were leaving the line. On the narrow road we passed their wagons, the wagons had lanterns on their axles and the light fell back and forth on the trees. The Russians in the wagons were singing. I do not know how long we were moving but the Russians with us were drunk and arguing among themselves and I knew we had become lost. I sat with Hofios on the old snow under the trees listening to a machinegun in the forest and when I saw the flare go up through the trees there were stars but until then I had not noticed.

Later, leaving the forest we were on the flatlands again, in all directions the farms burning. By a farm a sentry talked to one of the Russians who was with us, there was thin light at a window, I could hear the whining of a generator and felt better about where we were, I thought it was a command post. A motorcycle came to the house, a moment its light was on our line and around us were more tanks. On the road which was paved now it was not long before we stopped again, in the wind it was colder and we waited on the ground. I lay against my rucksack wanting to sleep, watching across the flatlands the farms burning, and a plane was over us, I knew it was German because of its engines, and somewhere a gun flashed, it slammed three times at the sky, but otherwise it was

quiet. Hofios nudged me, he gave me a cigarette and I heard him saying we were going again. I smoked the cigarette not wanting to go to sleep and this way some of us moved, there were some who did not move who were sleeping beside the road, but the village was not far. In the moonlight I saw the houses, in one of the houses they were singing. We opened the door but their officers were drunk and did not see us. We went behind the house to the stable and in a loft in our blankets we slept together under the hay.



## DELL SKEELS

### Jack and the Beanstalk

*Now Jack, my boy, weeping in the night,  
High house behind you, what knell so peals  
You back to bone-brew castle? What lure seals  
You thus in ritual nightmare? Into the light  
From the warm oven toasting tumbled out,  
Chicken in armpit, on world's worst avenue  
Pell mell absconding, what spell has bound you?  
What siren limes you within the ogre's shout?  
  
Fee—much overdue but where is the collector?  
Fie, for you killed him, my widow's impish son;  
Foe lay in wait but you did not surrender;  
Fum is the darkness into which you won,  
And won the hén gold-gutted, squawking from under  
Your bloody shirt that proves you Englishman.*

Poem On My Thirty-third Birthday

*This day robed scholar multiplies, divides, in tower  
Proves trinity is one; past wicket slides poor Bedlam Tom  
Hugging his bony hams to angled wall, stone-pitted wall  
Where once we asked salvation; tall hot-tempered Dick  
Across the pimpled postern of close-mortised Time  
Breedes now our bleak reunion; Harry pricking there  
Below goat covered citadel, grey featured, cape on chin,  
Can hardly know hubbed arrogance above him.  
Better so. St. Thomas sitting on a golden stool  
Talked for a time with God (that time most virginal  
The world nestled softly within its pod). Now thong  
Breaks bloody phlegm within the broken throats  
Of holy men; and we and it are whirling, very old  
Tom whines, sick Richard dances, Harry scolds.*



## Modern Japanese Fiction

Among the generalizations about Japan and the Japanese which seem irresistible to Occidentals, one at least survives examination. No single event in the nation's history has produced such far-ranging consequences as the appearance of Commodore Perry's fleet of "black ships" and the subsequent opening of Japan to the West. Prior to 1600 Japan had been an energetic community in which native culture and a truly exquisite taste had developed within the framework of feudalism, with considerable assistance from China. From 1600 until 1853 the country was under the domination of the Tokugawa family. With the powerful Tokugawa lords as its leaders, Japan withdrew into an isolationism quite unequalled by any maritime nation, before or since. Inevitably the arts crystallized into a classical pattern and soon stagnated. In 1868 Emperor Meiji ascended the throne, and Japan became a limited monarchy with a Diet modelled closely upon the English Parliament. The mercantile classes, who overthrew the nobility and replaced them with the entirely unautocratic Emperor, (thereby giving birth to the fiction that the Japanese worship their Emperor as a Being Divine) were quick to note that the progress of the West was enhanced by republican institutions, supported by commerce and technology, and maintained by vast military and naval power. All these Japan sought to acquire.

Once Japan embarked upon her irrevocable course her history parallels that of her western models. Her program of industrialization brought with it the social upheavals which had appeared in Europe: the substitution of a mercantile and business bourgeoisie for political authority, the emergence of a labor movement and a radical political philosophy, a tremendous increase of population, a mushrooming urban growth, financial depression, a rise of commercial and military imperialism, alternate breakdown and restoration of traditionalism, the absorption of new ideas, a conflict between conventional morality and social attitudes dictated by materialism, the maneuverings of power politics, and war. Within the space of a normal lifetime many a Japanese has seen this compressed counterpart of western history enacted before his eyes, only to see it end in 1945 with total defeat and devastation of his nation's post-Restoration material accomplishment.

This turbulent period affected literature as well as other aspects of life in Japan. Nothing heretofore, not even the introduction of Chinese, had produced such startling changes in the orientation of the Japanese mind as did the application of Western technology and ethics to a rigidly conventional and feudal society. It is an error to suppose, as many have done, that Japan adopted the science of the West without also seriously embracing its culture. Nothing western was ignored in the sweeping program. With a thoroughness and a humorless lack of restraint reminiscent of the Germans, the people of Japan immersed themselves in things Occidental, the good along with the mediocre and the downright bad. If Western literature came comparatively late to new Japan

it came as an inundation, and the same national indigestion that followed the adoption of European political methods affected writers and educators.

Here we must look briefly at the state of Japanese letters in 1868. The Restoration found national literature in a state of near-ossification through imitation of classical models prescribed centuries before. Even poetry, delightful and entertaining though it was, held to rigid patterns of length and line. Literature had become conventionalized to the extent that new works, far from being creative, descended into mere virtuosity. Some new and powerful stimulus was needed to release the art of writing from the captivity of sterile classicism, and the impetus came from the West.

Although its good results outweighed the bad, the influence of the West on Japanese letters was not an unmixed blessing. The same enthusiastic unselectivity which marked Japanese acceptance of Occidental gadgetry was applied to the words of the West. For example, the first three English authors to receive full treatment at the hands of Japanese translators were Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, and Conan Doyle, a fact which caused one critic to note with understandable amusement that the Japanese must have wondered about the constant of English literature. But later, Russian, French, German and American writers were translated with varying degrees of faithfulness and discernment, and the Japanese reading public eagerly snapped up the product. The cultural side of Western materialism was taking an honored place along with tooth paste and depilatories in the households of the remodelled Japanese.

The uneven quality of translation was not solely the fault of the translators. They worked under severe handicaps. First among these was, of course, the mountainous language problem. Another, which interfered sharply with careful work, was the tendency of large Japanese publishing houses to order translations by contract, and therefore by the journalistic deadline principle. An eager uncritical public encouraged hasty work, and the hired translator was often paid on a piece-work basis. Add to this the fact that all manuscripts had to be submitted to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Board for censorship, and it will be seen that foreign books often appeared in sharply altered form to the Japanese reader. The Board was severe and often whimsical in its censorship; except in broad outlines neither a hack nor the most conscientious translator could anticipate what would and would not be acceptable. The result is most cases was entire suppression or at best many mangled texts.

Considered on the whole it is remarkable that Occidental writers have often appeared to advantage in Japanese dress. In the face of many handicaps capable Japanese translators, many of whom were splendid creative authors in their own right, have done literature a fine service through scholarly and meticulous renderings of foreign works into their native vernacular. In such cases they were men inspired in about equal parts by admiration for the originals and a desire to make them available to their fellow countrymen. With these attributes they possessed a becoming humility; to criticize their occasional slips is not to deny the basic sense of obligation with which they undertook their task.

Modern Japanese literature could not have developed as it did without the influx of Western translations, good and bad, which marked the period from 1868 to the appearance of creative national literature itself. The work of translators and other interpreters of Western culture preceded, and to a large extent

determined the content of the vast body of fiction since produced in post-Restoration Japan. Japanese writers did little original work until the Meiji "twenties," or from about 1890 on. They were biding their time, as it were, until they could absorb sufficient western materials to help in the development of new styles and technical devices necessary to the expression of new ideas. Creative literature, except for some work in the old tradition by established pre-Meiji writers, was scarce and of a poor order. The translators and critics of Western thought were the literary lions of the times. The effect produced, and still being produced upon modern Japan, was and is the largest single determinant in that nation's cultural life.

One of the pioneers among Japanese translators was fortunately a good literary man named Futabatei Shimei who chose the important Russian novelists as his field of exploit. His original writings consist of three novels of the naturalist school, the best of which is entitled *Heibon* (Mediocrity). This work is important as a pioneer effort in what was to become the dominant literary philosophy of Japan. Futabatei knew what he was doing, even to the point of anticipating the extremes to which his followers would carry Zolaism. Many of them, Kosugi for example, declared for Zolaism, although most of them abandoned it in the later years of their creative life. Kunikida, whose favorite theme was disintegration of character, and Tayama, the prophet of despair, are typical of the period (1900-1915). Tayama, it is worth noting, found solace and a sort of reaffirmation of optimism by embracing Buddhism in his later years.

By about 1910 the Japanese had caught up with some of the trends of contemporary Occidental literature, and had achieved a degree of maturity and sophistication which could scarcely have been predicted a generation before. Whatever progress naturalistic techniques can bring to literature had at least been considered by Japanese writers through their copious reading of Western models, and many features of naturalism had been incorporated in their own works. They recognized the nature both of the forces which were operating to change their society and those which were in opposition to such change; and, like their Western counterparts, they found a means of analysis in the naturalistic approach. Although by no means absent in Japan there was perhaps less social criticism of a direct sort than in Europe. But in their analyses of human psychology and the reactions of men to an insecure environment the Japanese were quite as thorough as the French and Russian models they followed. Most important historically was the fact that the established Japanese writer of 1910 was ready to seek other and better means of expressing himself, and his younger contemporaries were now supplied with a considerable body of native literature to study. Borrowing from and imitations of the West were to continue in volume, but the Japanese had acquired both discrimination and self-respect in the matter of literature. When the inevitable reaction to naturalism took place it did so as a consequence of divergent critical and esthetic theories, not as a symptom of chauvinism.

The first serious opposition to naturalism came with the writings of two excellent literary stylists named Natsume and Mori. These two men pointed up the more obvious weaknesses of naturalism, both in precept and by example. They avoided the dismal nihilism, the sense of frustration and hopelessness which

marked the work of the Zolaists. One method of lifting the human spirit from a philosophy of despair, they felt, was to re-examine the native tradition. Natsume and Mori found an answer in the transcendental philosophy of Buddhism and its frequent expression in *Haiku* poetry. Natsume particularly felt that the West had not provided a spiritual accompaniment to its material benefits. He and his followers therefore revived a sense of appreciation for the same Oriental tastes which the naturalists had rejected. Despite their failure to follow their theories to full development, the "Leisure" school's reaffirmation of Orientalism was a forward step.

To their discredit Natsume and Mori are good examples of an oft-repeated situation in Japanese letters. They worked in a spirit of rebellion against the then dominant naturalists, and as a consequence their approach was inclined to the negative. One senses a self-consciousness, a desire to avoid the identifying characteristics of their predecessors. At best their work is open to the charge of being too precious, too finely drawn and shaded, too much given to subtlety. What they gained in artistry they lost in force. Finally their later disciples were unable to elevate the esthetic principle to the eminence of valid critical theory. Instead they drifted more and more toward decadence. A still later group had to appear before we can speak of an independent and positive modern literature in Japan.

The decline of the naturalists and the esthetes (to use both terms in their broadest possible senses) left Japanese writing only two alternatives: either creative letters would become deceased or new and vigorous movements would have to be formulated. The latter is what happened, and it came about in three more or less distinct manifestations. The first was a movement already suggested in the paragraph above—the appearance of a kind of Neo-Intellectualism led by Kikuchi, Akutagawa, and the leading playwright of modern Japan, Yamamoto Yuzo. These men had little in common except that they were writers and that they were independent of any existing "school" or "trend." If one took 1930 as a date, one could say that these three represent the nearest thing to a synthesis of Oriental and Occidental that had so far taken place. They profited from the pioneering of all their predecessors and lost little by imitating any of them.

The second of the new literary trends is best represented by what might be called "Humanism," as the least misleading of many names which could be assigned to it. Its leading exponents were Mushakoji and Arishima, both of whom were aristocrats who became converted to Socialism. The adjective "Tolstoyan" has sometimes been applied to them, particularly to Arishima, who gave up his very considerable wealth and property in a spirit of Christian self-sacrifice. Apart from the uniformly excellent character of these men, they are remembered because they wrote exceedingly good prose. None of the stylists of a generation before could do more with the descriptive and connotative imagery of the Japanese language than Arishima. The works of these men deserve far more attention than they have yet received. While men like Kikuchi have met the challenge of political oppression and national catastrophe by becoming masters of the "slicks" and by speaking to women's afternoon clubs, and while men like the Christian Kagawa met MacArthur at the boat, the best writers of modern Japan were largely ignored by reason of simple neglect.

The final group to consider is the Proletarian School. Their history is inter-

esting, and it is tempting to say a great deal more about them than space allows. If one wishes to find literary and historical parallels with our own time, one would do well to study Japan of 1926-1931, a period which saw the country leave its path of synthesis to follow the Western pattern of misleading surface prosperity, fascism, and ultimate disaster. The rightists tended to whine at the proletarian domination of Japanese culture; the liberals were confused and intimidated; it was only the left which kept banging away with vigor and conviction. 1931, the date of what the Japanese still refer to as "The Manchurian Incident," saw the curtain fall on the nation's cultural life. Those writers who were not jailed or murdered either stopped writing for publication or kept safely within the limits set by ladies' journals and historical romances. Critics of the Proletarians pointed out that esthetic values were being lost by subservience to Marxist dogma, and that independent artists were hampered by a kind of sly conspiracy to print the work of radicals. Perhaps so, but the highly regarded independent esthetic criteria of the anti-proletarians strangely failed to appear after the imprisonment of leftist writers. The remaining critics were now free to write without any taint of radicalism. Unfortunately they were not able to write very well and ideas died in Japan. It is now seventeen years since, and the reader is invited to moralize on the lessons of history.

The near decease of Japanese literary life is all the more unfortunate when it is remembered that cultural contacts between East and West have largely been in one direction. Interest in Japan has been neither considerable nor dispassionate. Most Occidentals who have lived there were either missionaries, who tended to emphasize the converted minority, or business men and public officials, who were neither interested in nor equipped to appreciate an alien culture. Moreover the views of such people have nearly always been prejudiced by overtones of race-consciousness and colonialism. In the United States our notions about the Japanese are too often confused with the Nisei. If we are intelligent we look favorably upon the well-behaved Westernized youths of our Pacific Coast cities; if we are stupid we think of the "Jap" who runs the corner grocery.

Either view is misleading. The differences between life in Japan and the United States are still greater than the similarities, and it seems safe to predict that they will remain so. It is true that an educated Japanese will have read as widely in Western literature as his American counterpart, but even students of literature in the West rarely read anything written by a Japanese, and then almost never in the original. The language barrier is altogether too formidable to permit of extensive studies in Japanese. What we need in far greater amount than now obtains is a series of faithful translations by people who can bring literary knowledge and writing ability to the task. With a very few exceptions, among them Mr. Glenn Shaw, Occidentals have done very little translating from Japanese. The Japanese themselves usually write English in a wretched idiom which ranges from prosy mediocrity to the downright ludicrous. At present, therefore, we have available only a poor fraction of the vast body of material which is Japanese literature.

We hear much of the approaching acceptance of democracy by the Japanese. Apart from the fact that one may question whether something more dynamic than acceptance is not needed by democrats in the world of 1950, one wonders whether an army of occupation is the best vehicle for its preach-

ments. By comparison with the imperial forces the American army and its leaders may strike the Japanese as a model of fraternity and goodwill, but one suspects that real freedom in human relationships as well as by fiat will have to originate with the native population—probably with their writers. Such an event would be consistent with their past intellectual history. Meanwhile we shall have to await the day when creative writers in Japan will again continue the synthesis of world cultures which they once naively assumed would make their nation great above all others, but which both we and they can now recognize to be necessary to the survival of all men.

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933 AND JULY 2, 1946, of INTERIM, published four issues per volume at Seattle, Washington, for winter, 1949-50.  
State of Washington  
County of King

Before me, a notary public in and for the state and county aforesaid, personally appeared A. Wilber Stevens, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says he is the editor of Interim and that the following is, to best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of ownership and management of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (Section 437, P. L. & R.) to wit:

1. That the name, address of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business manager is A. Wilber Stevens, Box 24, Parrington Hall, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.
2. That the owner is A. Wilber Stevens, Seattle, Washington.
3. That the known bond holders, mortgagees, and other securities holders holding or owning 1% or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, are: None.
4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the name of the owner, stockholder and security holder, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears on the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given, also that the two said paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds or other securities than as so stated by him.

A. WILBER STEVENS.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 4th day of January, 1950.

LOUIS HAWKINS, Seattle, Wash.  
My Commission expires Nov. 15, 1951.

## The Trade and the Tower

Always there has been a quarrel between the practitioners of dramatic criticism and/or reviewing which is more regularly practiced today. There have been those who feel very strongly that the critic must of necessity take no active part in the theatre itself. Theoretically he should immolate himself in the top reaches of the Waldorf-Astoria Towers or hide himself away in the most domestic and low-hung of apartments. He should never take any active part in anything that concerns the theatre for fear he might taint himself with some aspect of commercialism. He should avoid all contact with playwrights, producers, or actors. He should pretend that the commercial structure of the theatre does not exist except to send him two seats on the aisle for openings.

He must also pretend that plays simply get to be written and produced by osmosis and that anything that he may say in print or over the radio or television is something so removed from reality that it will have no effect upon the box-office. If he is a man who is frank about himself concerning his abilities in the theatre, he must realize that the influence of his written or spoken word is considerable if he has any following among the members of the audience. He has, therefore, a responsibility to the theatre which actually gives him his living. If newspaper publishers, radio, or television sponsors thought that the words of George Jean Nathan, John Mason Brown, or Brooks Atkinson, carried no weight with the theatre going public, there would be a number of cancelled contracts and several unhappy admirers of the stage today.

This is in no way intended to imply that any or either of these gentlemen do not have at least some practical conception of the rigors of theatrical producing in 1949. As a matter of fact, the first named gentleman has—if rumor can be believed—had a great deal to do with the producing of the plays of Sean O'Casey, Paul Vincent Carroll, and William Saroyan. One fleeting whisper of a columnist even has him the unofficial adviser of a producer who is as addicted to the personal pulchritude of the “girls” as is Mr. Nathan in his accolades in the *New York Journal-American* and the *American Mercury*.

Burns Mantle used to love to tell the story of the conversation he had with Alexander Wollcott who had been newly (1914) appointed as drama critic of the *New York Times*. The Messrs. Mantle and Wollcott, along with all of the other principal dramatic critics of New York were enroute by steamer to London and Paris to examine in the original the plays that would be produced on Broadway during the following season. In those days it was considered the necessary thing to allow critics to commune with source material before they undertook to evaluate what were frequently hack jobs when finally realized on Broadway.

Alex Wollcott was young and enthusiastic and so queried Mr. Mantle, who had only three years before moved from the *Denver Post* to the *New York Evening Mail*, as to what his attitude should be toward associating with the people

in the theatre itself. Burns told him that under no circumstances should he meet or have any friendship with actors or actresses and that if he saw a producer approaching, he should flee. Ruesfully, Burns has admitted in print that Alex practised the exact opposite of what he had told him and had made a big success of it.

It has always seemed to me that the more you know about your job—which is the theatre and all aspects of producing—the better you can perform your theatrical function. Yet a very distinguished drama critic and lecturer once arrived at a party given by a well known playwright in his hotel suite and on discovering the presence of Ina Claire, Jane Cowl, and Ethel Barrymore in animated discussion, fled the precincts in terror.

It has always seemed to me that a drama critic can never successfully operate in a vacuum and must of necessity have had some participation in the theatre. So long as a reviewer is financially supported by the artistic medium which he criticizes, he necessarily must participate in the economics of the commercial realization of the art for which he practices criticism. Without in any way compromising his decision he needs to have a practical comprehension of the workings of his field.

If possible it seems to me that every newspaper or magazine publisher should consider seriously in the choice of their critics, a man or woman who has had some practical knowledge of the field in which they are working. There has been too much emphasis laid on the newspaper experience of the reviewer and too little on their knowledge of the field for which they are supposed to practice criticism. There are some brilliant exceptions to this rule, notably Percy Hammond, who graduated from the sports pages to extremely distinguished criticism, and, of course, Heywood Broun who handled almost every aspect of newspaper publishing.

If you have actually acted or directed or designed or stage managed any Broadway—or even off-Broadway—production then you will have a better comprehension of the problems which face the producer, the director, the designer, and the actor in any given presentation in Times Square or in Seattle or in Pasadena or in Cleveland. Your critical vision is not obscured because you know of the technical difficulties of mounting a sixteen scene show or the practicalities of casting a three character play requiring stars. Actually you are in a better position to judge the final results if you have a true conception of what brought about the production.

The sooner that the Ivory Tower group and the practical group of play reviewers achieve a mutual understanding and a sound basis of play judgment, the sooner we will have drama criticism and play reviewing on a level which will help, not harm, the theatre. Presumably that is what we are all hoping to achieve.

# KENNETH O. HANSON

## Mendicants and Strolling Players

*The Strait of Anian*, by Earle Birney, The Ryerson Press, 1948.

*Y & X*, by Charles Olson, with drawings by Corrado Cagli, Black Sun Press, 1948.

*Terror and Decorum*, by Peter Viereck, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.  
\$3.00.

The three poets above are not equally well-known nor do the books represent "comparable" efforts except in the most general sense. Mr. Viereck's book, which this year received the Pulitzer prize, is a first collection. Mr. Birney is the author of two previous books, *David* (1942) and *Now Is the Time* (1945), and about half the poems in the present book have been reprinted from the earlier volumes. Mr. Olson's work does not appear in book form at all, but consists of five poems printed with five line drawings on a single panel folded into a slip cover. What makes consideration of the three together particularly interesting (aside from quality and extent of accomplishment, which vary considerably) is that each represents one of the extreme attitudes toward the craft of verse found among "young" writers. And in the case of Mr. Viereck, whose work has been widely acclaimed, we may perhaps see the direction in which popular verse is developing.

### I

Mr. Birney, who has twice received the Governor-General's Award, is one of Canada's leading poets, but he differs from such compatriots as A. M. Klein and A. J. M. Smith by his greater preoccupation with Canadian themes and his relative lack of an individual tone. His primary concern is with

*... the case of a high-school land  
deadset in adolescence ...*

and his investigation of the "case" includes the prairie wheatlands and the seacoast, Vancouver and Quebec, the observation of minutiae of forest life and loose rambling accounts of first settlers. What saves his verse from the narrowness and sterility of much regional writing is this variety, the extent of the region he celebrates, rather than an inclusive personal vision.

In technique, Mr. Birney is indebted to a great many poets, particularly Hopkins. The result of this deliberate study of the poets who have formed the tradition of contemporary verse is an amazingly flexible and subtle manner that accommodates great variety, changing as the landscape changes, varying in tone as occasion demands. In "Mappemounde" his lines are packed, the diction thickened.

*No not this whalehall can whelm us  
shiptamed, gullgraced, soft to our glidings.*

“In This Verandah” makes use of the modern idiom.

*Make your hearts into cordite  
nipple them with steel . . .  
the beautiful bright coyote  
will outflank the awnings  
outsit the three bitches.*

Two such different poems as “David” and “Gulf of Georgia” show the ability to handle both loose flowing rhythms and a clean, highly controlled language.

Mr. Birney is almost never guilty of a bad line, but along with this admirable skill is the inability to arrive at a language unmistakably his own, the inability to set down a line that immediately kindles for the reader. The best poems in the book are short lyrics, poems dealing with the sea, or a particular place. The least impressive ones are the long narratives, the “folksy” poems of the wheat country with their use of rural speech and a reliance on cracker-barrel philosophy (the old man works hard on “the place” to give his boys a chance, he’s done it for them, and they’ve left him to go to the city; life is real). But even in his most signal failures there is something of the strength and potential of Canada. Mr. Birney is a poet of modest talent, content with a very real competence, and what he writes of Ulysses may well represent his own artistic attitude.

*Go canny, of course, but don’t go wrong,  
there’s no guarantee of an epic ending.*

In considering Mr. Olson it is at once apparent that here is the reverse of the coin: a minor poet whose primary concern is the elucidation of a highly individual point of view in a vigorous personal language. This is not to say he is more “obscure” than Birney (although he is less public) but merely that as a poet his different aims and attitudes appeal to a different kind of reader. His verse makes plain a kinship with the writers of the early ‘twenties whose aim was a poetic language free from dust and fustian, one working cleanly and at maximum efficiency. Mr. Olson is interested in the poem rather than the figure, the pattern rather than the “pretty speech.” In a sense, he is a more serious poet than Mr. Birney, more concerned with the unique experience of each poem.

Although the use of myth in his poems indicates the influence of Jungian theory, Olson’s point of view is finally his own, compounded of tough-mindedness and a keen wit. This last is not a matter of verbal gymnastics or the quick thrust, but is an informing thing, a way of seeing (as for example, Chaplin vs. Bob Hope). This appears at its best in “Trinacria” (Who fights behind a shield, is separate, weak of the world . . .) and in the final lines from “The Green Man.”

*Let those who want to chase a king.  
And you who go when the green man comes . . .  
go as the dog goes at his heels  
ahead, aside, and always after  
be full of  
loud laughter*

*Of bitter work, and of folly  
cockatrice and cockololly  
furiously sing!*

Detached quotation indicates only a part of the complexity in this kind of verse, but it is apparent the wit is conceptual. Mr. Olson's special merit lies in his use of such lean, hard language to achieve an intensity of poetic feeling. Within his chosen limits, Mr. Olson writes with authority.

## II

Mr. Viereck is a more ambitious poet than either Mr. Birney or Mr. Olson, and he has already established himself as one of America's most important young poets. Because of this, it is disturbing to find that his fear of "obscurity" and the irrational has lead him to an uncomfortable reliance on verbal agility and an impressive intellect. ("The poet as culture hero has more basic things to trample down than empires, unless it be the Empire of the Id"—see his note on "Planted Poets.") It is perhaps not necessary to note that the reader can scarcely fail to accept Mr. Viereck's own evaluation of his intelligence (there is ample proof of it on every page of his book) nor to add that in the writing of verse intellect is no inconsiderable asset. But I think it is not impertinent to suggest that intellect is not enough. Ezra Pound was aware of its limitation when he wrote, "Saxpence reward for any authenticated case of intellect having stopped a chap's writing poesy! You might as well claim that railway tracks stop the engine. No one ever claimed they would make it go." Mr. Viereck comes dangerously close to making that claim.

Viereck's self-conscious and rather high-minded theorizing about the role of the poet and the function of poetry is immediately brought to the reader's attention by a note opposite the book's title page referring to the essay on "Marabouts and Planted Poets" (p. 95), which in turn refers the reader to seven poems treating the same subject. From the essay one learns the poet is the "word-sobered exorcizer of cliches," the sacred clown, the culture hero who "imposes form upon nature"; the extreme qualities of poetry which must be reconciled are its "terror" or fierceness, and "decorum." What one gets from the verse is not quite the same thing. For all the talk, there is little of the Marabout and much of the prestidigitator, little of terror and much decorum. Mr. Viereck seems to regard his verse essentially as a commodity, in which he can trade as in any other commodity. Decorum, of course, finds a ready market.

The verse in the book is almost exclusively surface verse, verse written "about" something, or "on" some topic. As prefaces to poems and groups of poems the volume presents a generous little anthology of material from other poets, philosophers, novelists, etc. On page one Mr. Viereck quotes from his own poem on page 82. Subsequently he quotes Baudelaire (p. 3), the Marquis de Sade (p. 9), a nursery rime (p. 26), Shakespeare (p. 31), the dictionary (p. 42), Stephen Gossen and Marlowe (p. 49), Baudelaire (p. 58), Machiavelli and Shakespeare in pidgin English (p. 61), an Assyrian inscription (p. 67), Tennyson and Yeats (p. 69), a lecture (p. 71), Shakespeare (p. 72), Santayana (p. 73), Blake (p. 75), etc. The references are made for a variety of reasons of course, but so persistent a choosing of "texts" indicates a basic dependence in the

verse. The quotations are not assimilated into new poems, as in Eliot or Edith Sitwell, but merely serve as platters on which the new poems can be arranged, like wax fruit.

To a certain extent Mr. Viereck is a victim of his own pretensions and a reputation somewhat in advance of accomplishment. In a dry season, the freshet is likely to be considered more profound than it is. *Terror and Decorum* contains, of course, a number of admirable poems, in which Viereck's wit and ability to explore a paradox appear to excellent advantage. "Dolce Ossessione" is one of the best of these, and avoids the major defect of Viereck's verse (which is for the language to perform, acrobatically, more motions than the thought demands).

*Will no one watch me? Look! I'll dance on thread  
Or hold my breath for cameras till I burst.  
Step close, please; see, I'll pick your pockets first  
And shine—like truth?, like lies?—and then drop dead...*

This same brashness and clarity of approach is seen in "Love Song to Eohippus," "Poet," and in the famous "Kilroy." At its worst, it produces a poem in such astonishingly bad taste as the one to Hart Crane, with its memorable refrain.

*Was freedom merely this: to flee  
Nine years from selling fudge?  
Would gorgeous lies bring freedom quicker?  
Walt did it—Walt, the city slicker,  
Sold Hart the Brooklyn Bridge.*

(Hart, Hart, can you hear me?  
Hey Hart, don't jump!)

One can only conclude that contemporary verse has equally as much to fear from the unbridled exorcise of the "intelligence" as from the Empire of the Id.

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